



NORTHWEST TERRITORIES LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY

3rd Session

Day 53

15th Assembly

HANSARD

Thursday, March 10, 2005

Pages 1945 - 1984

The Honourable Paul Delorey, Speaker

Legislative Assembly of the Northwest Territories

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Published under the authority of the Speaker of the Legislative Assembly of the Northwest Territories

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YELLOWKNIFE, NORTHWEST TERRITORIES

Thursday, March 10, 2005

Members Present

Honourable Brendan Bell, Mr. Braden, Honourable Paul Delorey, Honourable Charles Dent, Mrs. Groenewegen, Honourable Joe Handley, Mr. Hawkins, Honourable David Krutko, Ms. Lee, Honourable Michael McLeod, Mr. McLeod, Mr. Menicoche, Honourable Michael Miltenberger, Mr. Pokiak, Mr. Ramsay, Honourable Floyd Roland, Mr. Villeneuve, Mr. Yakeleya, Mr. Zoe

ITEM 1: PRAYER

---Prayer

SPEAKER (Hon. Paul Delorey): Good afternoon, colleagues. Orders of the day. Item 2, Ministers' statements. The honourable Minister of Resources, Wildlife and Economic Development, Mr. Bell.

ITEM 2: MINISTERS' STATEMENTS

Minister's Statement 109-15(3): NWT Protected Areas Strategy

HON. BRENDAN BELL: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, as the Premier has already stated in this House, the Government of the Northwest Territories supports the Mackenzie gas project, and a pipeline built down the Mackenzie Valley to deliver NWT natural gas to continental energy markets. Our government is committed to ensuring that the Mackenzie gas project and other resource developments in the NWT are constructed and operated in a manner that recognizes our respect for and unique relationship with our land, water and wildlife resources.

Mr. Speaker, I believe we achieved a significant step in ensuring the protection of significant spaces with the funding of the Mackenzie Valley five-year action plan under the Northwest Territories Protected Areas Strategy. Mr. Speaker, the action plan is the result of a strong partnership, led by communities and land claim organizations and supported by the territorial and federal governments, industry and conservation organizations, including Ducks Unlimited, the Canadian Parks and Wilderness Society and the World Wildlife Fund Canada.

The budget currently before us identifies our commitment to provide \$1.5 million over the next five years to implement the action plan. This funding, along with a \$9 million commitment from the federal government and the \$5.4 million provided by environmental organizations means we can continue proper conservation planning in the Mackenzie Valley, and allows us to develop our land in a sustainable manner.

Mr. Speaker, on February 21, 2005, Mr. Monte Hummel of World Wildlife Fund Canada presented a keynote address at the Nunavut teachers' conference in Iqaluit. Mr. Hummel stressed the pressing need to develop and implement protected areas strategies in the North. He drew attention in his remarks to the good work in progress by NWT communities to identify and reserve areas that are ecologically and culturally important to them. We believe this community-driven approach, the partners have embraced, will stand as an example for other jurisdictions.

Mr. Speaker, as we continue to move forward on construction of the Mackenzie gas project, we must also advance the designation of protected areas. The action plan will help us meet our goal of identifying, reviewing,

establishing interim protection and evaluating areas for protection in the Mackenzie Valley. It will also ensure the biodiversity and cultural significance of the Mackenzie Valley is protected for all generations.

Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the commitment of our Protected Areas Strategy partners, particularly communities, regional organizations and land claim organizations, to working for a balanced approach to development and conservation. Together we can ensure the sustainable development of our natural resources. Thank you.

---Applause

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Bell. Item 2, Ministers' statements. The honourable Minister of Education, Culture and Employment, Mr. Dent.

Minister's Statement 110-15(3): 50th Anniversary Of The Courts

HON. CHARLES DENT: This week marks the celebrations of the 50th anniversary of the Supreme Court of the Northwest Territories. Before the court was established, justice was administered for the most part by lay magistrates. Serious cases were most often tried in Alberta.

When Justice Sissons became the first judge of the Court, he said that justice would be taken to every man's door and he meant what he said. Before he retired, Justice Sissons traveled an estimated 275,000 miles by plane and dogsled. The practice of the court going to the people so they can see justice being done and accused can be tried by a jury of their peers remains to this day.

Justice Sissons and his successor, Justice Morrow, were at the forefront of what is today an increased awareness of aboriginal rights in Canada.

- Perhaps the most important decision from this era, which significantly affected political aspirations of aboriginal people in the NWT, was made in 1973 by Justice Morrow in the Paulette case. A number of chiefs had applied to lodge a caveat with the registrar of land titles claiming an interest in an area of land comprising 400,000 square miles in the western part of the territory. They argued that treaties 8 and 11 did not extinguish aboriginal rights in relation to land. Justice Morrow agreed and so ruled. Although the decision was overturned in the Supreme Court of Canada, the decision had significant political consequences for the federal government and aboriginal people. Prior to this case, the federal government had claimed that aboriginal rights to land had been extinguished by the signing of treaties 8 and 11. Now the federal government accepted that there were serious moral and legal questions that cast doubt on their position and there began a perceptive and positive shift in the federal approach to aboriginal land claims.
- In 1961, despite fierce opposition by the federal government, Justice Sissons held that a marriage that took place in accordance with Inuit custom was a

valid marriage in the eyes of the law. Later in 1965, he held that Inuit and Dene custom adoptions were valid adoptions recognized by the law.

- On the question of our political evolution, in the 1999 case of *Morin v. the Conflict of Interest Commissioner*, Justice Vertes concluded that the Legislative Assembly of the Northwest Territories is "a separate and distinct legal entity" and not simply an "organ" of the federal government. This was an important decision that recognized the establishment of a fully responsible government in the Northwest Territories.

--Applause

Clearly, the Supreme Court has been an important institution in recognizing the rights of aboriginal people and the constitutional status of the Northwest Territories.

We are honoured to welcome a number of our former judges and lawyers back to Yellowknife to attend a conference this week celebrating this important anniversary. As well, legal counsel and judges joined us from Nunavut and the Yukon.

Mr. Speaker, a number of them are in the gallery today and I will hopefully be able to introduce them later.

The Sissons-Morrow carving collection is on display all this month at the Yellowknife Courthouse. It is representative of the most important cases from the first two decades of the Supreme Court. I would like to invite the Members of this House to visit our courthouse to view the collection. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

---Applause

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Dent. Mr. Dent, I just want to mention that I recognized you as Minister of Education, Culture and Employment. It would have probably been more appropriate as the Minister of Justice.

---Applause

I certainly want to join you in recognizing our guests today in the gallery. Item 2, Ministers' statements. The honourable Minister of Municipal and Community Affairs, Mr. McLeod.

Minister's Statement 111-15(3): Northwest Territories Games Pilot Project

HON. MICHAEL MCLEOD: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to rise today and share with Members information on the inaugural Northwest Territories Games being held in Fort Smith, March 18th to 21st.

This exciting pilot program will provide an opportunity for youth from all communities to participate in and experience the benefits of a multi-sport games competition.

Host organizers are expecting close to 400 participants from all Northwest Territories communities. They will be participating in curling, cross-country skiing, ski and snowshoe biathlon, snowshoeing, snow soccer, Dene games, Inuit games and some ice sport clinics.

It is our hope that they will enjoy this experience and take away from it a lifelong interest in physical activity and making healthy lifestyle choices. Some may even choose to go on to higher level events such as the Arctic Winter Games or the Canada Games.

The total Government of the Northwest Territories contribution to the NWT Games is \$100,000. The

departments of Education, Culture and Employment, Health and Social Services, Justice and the NWT Housing Corporation, along with Municipal and Community Affairs, have contributed financially because each recognize the future benefits to supporting events like this. I would like to extend my sincere thanks to each of those Ministers for agreeing to support this worthwhile event. The balance of the funding for the games has been derived from Western Canada Lottery revenues and the Government of Canada.

Mr. Speaker, I would also like to recognize the tremendous effort put into organizing the Northwest Territories Games by the Sport North Federation. Within a short time frame, they have managed to coordinate and plan this event and have partnered with us to make this happen.

For those Members of the Legislative Assembly who have decided to attend the games, I am certain that you will see youth from communities have a great experience that they will treasure for the rest of their lives.

In closing, Mr. Speaker, it is important to recognize the outstanding contribution from Fort Smith. The community, their volunteers and businesses and many local organizations have all come together to make this event a reality. Without their efforts, these games simply would not have been possible. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

---Applause

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. McLeod. Item 2, Ministers' statements. The honourable Premier, Mr. Handley.

Minister's Statement 112-15(3): Progress On The Deh Cho Bridge Project

HON. JOE HANDLEY: Mr. Speaker, I would like to give the Assembly a status report on the progress of the Deh Cho Bridge project.

It was a little over three years ago, in February 2002, when the Fort Providence Combined Council Alliance first brought forward its proposal to form a public/private partnership that would build a bridge across the Mackenzie River near Fort Providence. The government of the 14th Assembly gave the proposal a careful review and found that the proposal was not only feasible but, in many ways, quite attractive. First and foremost was the prospect of a permanent, all-weather highway link across the Mackenzie River that would eliminate, once and for all, the seasonal interruptions in highway service.

Secondly, bridges are expensive pieces of infrastructure. Amongst the many competing demands on the public purse, the government could not have considered a public expenditure of that size for many years to come. The mechanism of the public/private partnerships offered a way to raise the capital for the bridge without adding to the government's debt. The government was definitely interested in the alliance's proposal and authorized the beginning of negotiations to work out the proposal in greater detail.

By November 2002, the partners had turned the initial proposal into a memorandum of intent that spelled out all the steps that would have to be taken to form the public/private partnership that would finance, design, construct, operate and pay for the Deh Cho Bridge. Having signed the memorandum of intent, work then began on the Concession Agreement. The Concession Agreement is the legal document that actually establishes the public/private partnership and, in every aspect of the project, defines the respective duties, responsibilities and

obligations of the partners. The Concession Agreement is a long-term, 35-year agreement covering the initial planning and design of the bridge through to the last payment and the transfer of ownership to the Government of the Northwest Territories. Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to report that the partners have agreed to the Concession Agreement and, subject to final approval, we have a document to govern the bridge project.

In April 2003, the Deh Cho Bridge Corporation made formal application to the Mackenzie Valley Land and Water Board that initiated the regulatory approvals process. On its part, the 14th Legislative Assembly passed the Deh Cho Bridge Act in June of 2003 authorizing the Minister of Transportation to enter into a Concession Agreement and to collect the tolls that would pay for the bridge.

The Mackenzie Land and Water Board referred the Deh Cho Bridge project for an environmental assessment in January 2004. This has caused a delay in the original project schedule, but I am pleased to report that the Mackenzie Valley Environmental Impact Review Board has provided a positive recommendation. It is hoped that in the next week or two, the federal Minister of Indian Affairs and Northern Development will approve the project proceeding to the regulatory phase. This issuing of permits and authorizations should proceed in relatively short order.

I am also pleased to report that the Department of Transportation has accepted the Deh Cho Bridge Corporation's conceptual design for the bridge. It remains to produce detailed engineering plans from the concept that contractors will use to prepare their tender bids and ultimately to construct the bridge. TD Securities has indicated that it is prepared to finance the project. The sum of the tender bids, the corporation's development costs to date plus the financing charges will put a final price on the bridge. It is on the basis of this final price that the Executive Council will decide whether or not it is in the best interest of the Northwest Territories to sign and enter into the Deh Cho Bridge Concession Agreement.

That decision, Mr. Speaker, is still some months away. If all goes well, we hope that actual work on the construction of the Deh Cho Bridge might begin as soon as this summer. I know from everyone I have spoken to about the bridge, we are all looking forward to the day when it opens for traffic and the disruptions of freeze-up and breakup are a thing of the past.

Mr. Speaker, it may seem like we are taking our time in formally entering into the Concession Agreement, but we need to ensure that the agreement is the right one for all parties. The three years it has taken to get where we are today have slipped by quickly. Consider for a moment that the alliance first brought forward its proposal in the term of the 14th Assembly. If we commit to go ahead in the next few months, it will take until the term of the 24th Assembly to pay for the bridge. We want to be sure that between now and then, the people of the Northwest Territories will agree that the government of the 15th Assembly made the right decision. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

---Applause

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Handley. Item 2, Ministers' statements. The honourable Minister of Justice, Mr. Dent.

Minister's Statement 113-15(3): Community Justice

HON. CHARLES DENT: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I'm pleased to provide this House with more details about the NWT justice system and in particular how this government works with communities to meet their needs and aspirations.

One of our guiding principles has always been that an effective justice system is one that is accepted by the communities it serves. Community involvement leads to acceptance and a justice system that meets the needs and aspirations of these communities.

The department encourages communities to increase their involvement in the administration of justice through community justice committees and by using local justices of the peace. We also maintain effective management of offenders using the least restrictive measures possible and promote community involvement in offender rehabilitation and reintegration through such programs as wilderness camps, spirituality programs and elder counselling.

Our community justice committees work with elders and community leaders to develop innovative solutions. Over the past three years, there has been a significant increase in the number of cases being diverted to the 30 active community justice committees. In 2001-02, there were 186 cases diverted. This number grew to 250 in 2002-03 and 373 in 2003-04.

These committees make decisions that directly affect residents in their communities. Justice committees are engaged in dealing with a wide variety of cases and have many options for innovative solutions at the community level. They deal with youth and adult cases using a restorative approach to justice. They promote abuse-free and crime-free lifestyles and activities that lead to healthier relationships between individuals and their communities. They may also administer the Fine Options Program, Community Service Order Program and after-care programs.

This next fiscal year, 2005-06, funding will be available to every community in the NWT to hire a part-time justice coordinator. Additional funding will also be available for program delivery. These funds will assist communities in developing a justice system that meets their unique needs and provides them with a safer environment.

Our justices of the peace have seen their roles expanded over the years. We now have 42 JPs in 19 communities and they are being utilized more and more. JPs will play a key role in taking preventative measures to protect victims of family violence under the Protection Against Family Violence Act.

Mr. Speaker, I look forward to the continued cooperation between communities and the Department of Justice as we develop our NWT justice system. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

---Applause

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Dent. Item 2, Ministers' statements. The honourable Minister responsible for the Workers' Compensation Board, Mr. Krutko.

Minister's Statement 114-15(3): North American Occupational Safety And Health Week

HON. DAVID KRUTKO: Mr. Speaker, North American Occupational Safety and Health, or NAOSH, Week will be held from May 1st through 7th this year. The goal of NAOSH Week is to focus the attention of employers,

workers, the general public and all partners in occupational safety and health on the importance of preventing injury and illness in the workplace and at home. NOASH Week was first launched in June 1997 marked by an agreement between Canada, the United States and Mexico.

For many years, responsibility for NAOSH Week activities in the North fell to the WCB. Six years ago, the WCB extended an invitation to several parties in business, labour and government to join them in promoting this important event. Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to report that this partnership has proved to be very successful. These organizations, along with members of the youth committee, have brought new perspectives and fresh ideas to the event and it continues to grow in importance.

The theme for this year's NAOSH Week, "Equip, Educate, Empower" draws attention to the ever-present need for ongoing safety and training in the workplace. This is especially critical in the North with our young and ever increasing workforce.

The 2005 NAOSH Week organizing and youth committees have several events planned: an employer contest, video launches and safety demonstrations, to name a few.

This year will mark the first national launch north of 60. We are proud to announce that the ceremonies will be held here in Yellowknife at the Great Hall, May 2nd. I encourage all Members to get involved in NAOSH Week this year and strengthen their commitment to occupational safety and health. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

---Applause

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Krutko. Item 2, Ministers' statements. Item 3, Members' statements. The honourable Member for Hay River South, Mrs. Groenewegen.

ITEM 3: MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

Member's Statement On Federal Appointment Of The Mackenzie Valley Land And Water Board Chairperson

MRS. GROENEWEGEN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, in follow-up to my questions and comments in the House yesterday regarding the appointment of a chairperson for the Mackenzie Valley Land and Water Board, we heard on the 5:30 news that our concerns were too little, too late; the appointment was made and announced.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Shame! Shame!

MRS. GROENEWEGEN: This is the second time that I am aware that an appointment of a chair has been made to a very significant board and the nominations of the board itself have been ignored.

Mr. Speaker, what is the point of having establishment policies and rules surrounding these appointments if they can be so easily and callously set aside? Mr. Speaker, this is about far more of the appointment of a non-resident, non-nominated chair to a powerful federally appointed board. This is about a lack of respect for process...

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear! Hear!

MRS. GROENEWEGEN: It's about a lack of respect for the people who sit on our boards and represent us on decisions around development and it's about lack of respect for the North and its people.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear! Hear!

MRS. GROENEWEGEN: Mr. Speaker, I thought we had moved beyond the days of colonialism and Ottawa knows best. We talk about political evolution, devolution of authority and powers. It's a sad day in the life of the Northwest Territories when blatant political patronage and disregard for process is handed down to us from some Liberal, crony, retread Minister who, to my knowledge, Mr. Speaker, has never even stepped foot in the Northwest Territories since becoming the Minister responsible for Indian Affairs and Northern Development.

Maybe Mr. Scott would like to appoint the Premier and the MLAs too, and I could be sure I wouldn't get reappointed.

---Laughter

---Applause

Mr. Speaker, we get our hopes up that we are on the federal radar, that they care about the input and aspirations of northerners and then something like this.

Well, Minister Scott is coming to Yellowknife next week and he wants to have a town hall in our Great Hall. The media suggested he might get a cool reception. I think we should give him a warm reception right on the hot seat where he belongs...

---Applause

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear! Hear!

MRS. GROENEWEGEN: ...to give account for his actions. How disrespectful that we found out about this appointment on the news. I guess it was more important to call the CBC than it was to call our government and discuss this appointment.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Shame!

MRS. GROENEWEGEN: Mr. Speaker, I invite as many northerners as possible to show up at Mr. Scott's town hall and tell him what we think. He will have our MP, the Minister of Northern Development, sitting right beside him and maybe it would be a good time to also ask her if she still represents the constituents of the North who elected her. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

---Applause

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mrs. Groenewegen. Item 3, Members' statements. The honourable Member for North Slave, Mr. Zoe.

Member's Statement On Appointment Of The Mackenzie Valley Land And Water Board Chairperson

MR. ZOE: Mahsi, Mr. Speaker. (English not provided)

Mr. Speaker, after my previous statements and statements by my colleagues over the past few days, it was with great disappointment that we heard on the 5:30 news last night that the Minister of Indian and Northern Affairs has gone ahead and named a British Columbia resident who was not nominated by board members as the new chair of the Mackenzie Valley Land and Water Board.

Mr. Speaker, the Mackenzie Valley Resource Management Act says very clearly that the Minister shall appoint the board chairs from among persons nominated by the board members unless the board members failed to nominate someone acceptable to the Minister within a reasonable time. In this case, the board did nominate three people, Mr. Speaker. Is the DIAND Minister going to explain to the board and to the people of the Northwest Territories why, in his opinion, none of these three

nominees, all northern residents, were acceptable? Where is the accountability, Mr. Speaker?

Mr. Speaker, this entire Mackenzie Valley Resource Management regime was set up as part of the implementation of the Sahtu and Gwich'in land claim agreements. The federal government just finished ratifying the Tlicho agreement, which will make us part of that regime too. These agreements were signed in good faith by our people with the understanding that the federal government would honour the spirit of its own laws and respect wishes of board members.

Mr. Speaker, the board structure was carefully designed so the interest of aboriginal people, the Government of the Northwest Territories and Canada were all balanced. The fallback provision allowing the Minister to appoint a chair who was not nominated by the board is the exception, not the rule. I don't believe it was ever intended, at least from our side, that this would be used except in extreme cases; for example, if the board was unable to come up with any nominations at all. Yet the Minister has gone ahead and appointed a chair who doesn't even live in the Northwest Territories. Is this the kind of total disregard and the wishes of the board and northerners what we have to look forward to?

What kind of message...

MR. SPEAKER: Mr. Zoe, your time for your Member's statement has expired.

MR. ZOE: Mr. Speaker, I seek unanimous consent to conclude my statement.

MR. SPEAKER: The Member is seeking unanimous consent to conclude his statement. Are there any nays? There are no nays. You may conclude your statement, Mr. Zoe.

MR. ZOE: Thank you, colleagues. Mr. Speaker, what kind of message does this send to the NWT residents, to the Sahtu people, to the Gwich'in people and the Tlicho people, not to mention the groups out there who are still negotiating?

I don't know what to think anymore, Mr. Speaker. With the ratification of the Tlicho agreement and the recent progress on devolution talks, I was feeling very optimistic about our future. Finally, it seems like we are getting somewhere in our struggle to take back control of our lands and resources, and then the federal government comes out with this colonialism action, putting someone who doesn't even live here in charge of a board that is going to make some critical decisions for the Northwest Territories in the next few years; decisions that will affect many generations of northerners, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, Minister Scott will be in the North next week, and I will urge the Premier to tell him how strongly we object to his decision and ask him to rescind the chair's appointment and appoint one of the board's nominees. It is what he should have done in the first place. If the Minister can't or won't fix this, then maybe the Premier needs to go over his head to the Deputy Prime Minister or even to the Prime Minister himself. Mr. Speaker, we can't just stand by and let the federal government drag us back to the 19th century. This colonialism has to end. We need to send a strong message that these are our lands, our resources and our future. We live here and we know what is best for ourselves and for our territory. Mahsi.

---Applause

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Zoe. Item 3, Members' statements. The honourable Member for Kam Lake, Mr. Ramsay.

Member's Statement On Appointment Of The Mackenzie Valley Land And Water Board Chairperson

MR. RAMSAY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I would like to use my Member's statement today to talk about the recent appointment of a new chairman to the Mackenzie Valley Land and Water Board. In January, the Mackenzie Valley Land and Water Board recommended three candidates for the job; all of them residents of the Northwest Territories. Territorial MLAs were not informed in advance of the appointment to the board, and many of us had even written recommendations for those who were passed over.

As Members of this Legislative Assembly, we take our jobs very seriously. This appointment was seen as being a pivotal one, given the amount of resource development that is taking place here. Regular Members were planning to move a motion asking the Premier to call Minister Scott to register our concerns. Yesterday afternoon, during a break in our proceedings here in the House, we were shocked to find that a non-northerner, a non-nominee, was appointed, and that the three northern candidates were passed over.

Mr. Speaker, in the year that I have been here, I have listened quite intently to the statements made by our Premier and our government regarding how our relationship with Ottawa is progressing. The action taken yesterday by Minister Scott is nothing but regressive and gives me no comfort in his or the governing Liberal Party of Canada's intentions in dealing with northern Canada. The colonialist approach has to stop.

We have to take control of our own affairs. Why do we continue to allow ourselves to be made the fool by Ottawa? Is it too much to ask for Minister Scott to pick up the phone and call our Premier and get a read on the politics of the appointment of a non-northerner, non-nominee? I don't think so. Politics is a funny business, Mr. Speaker, and I must admit, I had a good laugh when I watched Rick Mercer's Monday Report just six short weeks ago in which he made light of the fact that he and his comedy show had been to the Northwest Territories twice and that the Minister of DIAND, Mr. Scott, had not been here once. It has been 10 months since the federal election. Thanks to Rick Mercer, Mr. Scott is finally going to come north next week.

We will have many questions for Minister Scott when he visits us next week: Where is the economic development money announced in the Throne Speech last year? Where is the money to clean up Giant Mine? Are we expected to just stand by and watch DIAND govern and run our territory?

Mr. Speaker, right out of the Mackenzie Valley Resource Management Act, it states quite clearly in section 12(1)...Mr. Speaker, I seek unanimous consent to conclude my statement.

MR. SPEAKER: The Member is seeking unanimous consent to conclude his statement. Are there any nays? There are no nays. You may conclude your statement, Mr. Ramsay.

MR. RAMSAY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It states quite clearly, "The chairperson of a board shall be appointed by the federal Minister from persons nominated by a majority of the members." It would appear obvious that Minister

Scott didn't get a chance to read this act. Where was our Member of Parliament in all of this? Does she work for us, the constituents who elected her, or does she work for Minister Scott in DIAND? Certainly, these are questions that all northerners have, and they should ask Minister Scott and Ms. Blondin-Andrew next week when they are here. Thank you.

---Applause

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Ramsay. Item 3, Members' statements. The honourable Member for Range Lake, Ms. Lee.

Member's Statement On Women And Children's Healing And Recovery Program

MS. LEE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, quite clearly we are developing a theme here but, if I may, I just would like to use my Member's statement to speak about a very important program in Yellowknife. I support my colleagues in what they are saying about the other topic. But, Mr. Speaker, there is a very important program for women and children that is on the chopping block. I am hoping that, through this statement, the Minister of Health and Social Services will do everything in his power to make sure that this program not only survives but thrives.

Mr. Speaker, the program I am talking about is the Women and Children's Healing and Recovery Program being administered by the YWCA in Yellowknife. This program is a product of years of effort on the part of the women's community, started by the Status of Women with their document, Keeping Women and Communities Strong, where community women struggling with addictions ask for help with trauma, the root cause of many self-destructive behaviours. This eventually led to a pilot of three years which was recently evaluated, in July of 2003, by Four World Centres for Development Learning, a group that has evaluated many aboriginal healing programs.

Based on their recommendations, the YWCA changed the model of program delivery to give program control to aboriginal women so that the program could be truly culturally appropriate and the aboriginal staff at this program are now asking why is it that when all these improvements were made, the program is being considered for cutting.

Mr. Speaker, I could tell you that I had the privilege, by invitation, to visit the safe home where the women and children live while they undergo this program and treatment. I sat there and talked to a woman and her family over tea and bannock. They told me how this program is helping them heal and work out many issues that they have to deal with and they need to have a safe place to do it in. I could also tell you that, Mr. Speaker, women that come to this program come from all over the North, and the majority of the women are aboriginal. We know that we don't have a program for women and especially not one where women can go with their children. We know that treatment works better when women and children stay together. So, Mr. Speaker, I am sure that the Minister agrees that this program is worth keeping and worth fighting for. I would like the Minister to reconsider funding for this program. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear! Hear!

---Applause

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Ms. Lee. Item 3, Members' statements. The honourable Member for Nahendeh, Mr. Menicoche.

Member's Statement On Fort Simpson Long-Term Care Facility

MR. MENICOCHÉ: Mahsi, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to discuss the Fort Simpson long-term care facility. The department recently completed a review that supports my argument. The review identified the growing senior population of the Northwest Territories and the need for additional long-term care beds although they insist this need is in the long term. Mr. Speaker, in the long term is not good enough for me.

There are currently 16 residents in the Fort Simpson long-term care facility: one resident from Fort Liard; 12 residents from Fort Simpson; two residents from Jean Marie River; and one resident from Wrigley. As you can see, Mr. Speaker, the facility is being widely used over the entire Nahendeh district. The maximum capacity of the facility is 20 beds, which are shared with elders and physically disabled individuals. That leaves a grand total of four beds to meet the growing seniors population's long-term care needs of the Nahendeh district and, in fact, the entire Deh Cho region.

Mr. Speaker, there are already 16 occupants at the facility and an increasing seniors population in Nahendeh. Where does this government think to put the elderly when they require long-term care? Does this government believe they can ship the elderly all over the Northwest Territories to access other underutilized long-term care facilities? I don't think there is one Member sitting here that would appreciate being shipped to a different community with people you don't know, far away from your family, if you should ever need long-term care. Mr. Speaker, it is the responsibility of this government to support the physical, mental and social well-being of the residents of the Northwest Territories, and this includes the elderly.

Mr. Speaker, I am not asking for a new facility but to expand the existing facility to meet their future needs. Mahsi cho.

---Applause

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Menicoche. Item 3, Members' statements. The honourable Member for Inuvik Twin Lakes, Mr. McLeod.

Member's Statement On Carnival Season In The Beaufort-Delta

MR. MCLEOD: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, later this week I will be going back to Inuvik and everyone in the Beaufort-Delta will be gearing up for the carnival season. Carnival season is a great opportunity for residents of the area to gather, meet old friends and make some new ones. It is also a chance for bragging rights to see who has the fastest dogs and the fastest snowmobiles. There will be many feasts and old-time dances. This has always been a special time of the year. It announces the passing of a very long winter and the coming of spring.

Carnival season, Mr. Speaker, includes the Mad Trapper Rendezvous held in Aklavik and the Peel River Jamboree in Fort McPherson; the Mackenzie Jamboree in Tsiigehtchic; the Beluga Jamboree in Tuktoyaktuk; and, finally, the Muskrat Jamboree in Inuvik.

Mr. Speaker, the Muskrat Jamboree is dedicating this year's carnival to the victims of family violence and accepting donations on their behalf. They will also be making a donation to the Inuvik Transition House Society. Members of the Accountability and Oversight Committee - or AOC, for short, which I hope to be a part of today -- will also be in Tuk...

---Applause

...for part of the Beluga Jamboree. We look forward to watching some of the festivities and if given the chance, we will get to see some Members of AOC doing some fancy footwork in an old-time dance. Thank you.

---Applause

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. McLeod. Item 3, Members' statements. The honourable Member for Tu Nedhe, Mr. Villeneuve.

Member's Statement On Application Of The GNWT Affirmative Action Policy

MR. VILLENEUVE: Mahsi, Mr. Speaker. My Member's statement today is about the application of the affirmative action policy in the GNWT. Mr. Speaker, I have raised this issue several times during this Third Session and feel the need to continue to raise this issue, given the circumstances around this issue and that the consolidation of the human resource function in the government is currently in the development stage and I cannot see a better time to address this ongoing concern.

Mr. Speaker, the affirmative action report published in 2004 says that corporate human resources implemented the Management Assignment Program, or MAP program, in June 2003, and goes on to say that this succession program will provide an opportunity for employees to demonstrate management and leadership skills. The MAP program will prepare affirmative action employees for progressive roles at the management level.

Mr. Speaker, Minister Roland invited me and others to let him know if there is a breach of policy taking place. The evidence of a breach of policy of the affirmative action policy is clear; it is supposed to apply to all programs in the GNWT and it does not. The application forms for the Management Assignment Program -- or MAP program -- do not even mention affirmative action status. Minister Roland stated that the MAP program applies to everybody in the GNWT workforce.

I have to question this and I feel that the MAP acronym should more appropriately mean missing aboriginals program.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear! Hear!

---Applause

MR. VILLENEUVE: As the 2004 affirmative action report gives us stats for the first round of the MAP program, of the 101 applicants, 26 were accepted into the program. Of these, seven were female, three were aboriginal and six were indigenous non-aboriginal. The remaining 10 that were not mentioned must fall completely outside of the affirmative action policy and it appears that there are no other indigenous aboriginal persons qualified for this program.

Mr. Speaker, given this information and the fact that we have some departments that have no indigenous aboriginal senior managers like Aboriginal Affairs and Transportation, and the public statement from officials that the affirmative action policy is on its way out, and the

failure of the people responsible to form the Affirmative Action Advisory Committee as required, and the recent comments from the Minister that affirmative action is still going to be there but we are just going to call it something else, tells me, Mr. Speaker, that the affirmative action policy is all but dead already and that we are just being asked to sit back and watch that happen.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Villeneuve. Your time for your Member's statement has expired.

MR. VILLENEUVE: Mr. Speaker, I seek unanimous consent to conclude my statement.

MR. SPEAKER: The Member is seeking unanimous consent to conclude his statement. Are there any nays? There are no nays. You may conclude your statement, Mr. Villeneuve.

MR. VILLENEUVE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Thank you, colleagues. Well, Mr. Speaker, I cannot sit down and allow this to happen and I will be asking the Minister responsible for the FMBS more questions at the appropriate time. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

---Applause

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Villeneuve. Item 3, Members' statements. The honourable Member for Nunakput, Mr. Pokiak.

Member's Statement On Nunakput Report

MR. POKIAK: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise today to speak about a number of things, including condolences to the family of the late Edgar Kotokak and to send greetings to everyone in the Northwest Territories and my constituents.

Mr. Speaker, I understand the funeral for Edgar Kotokak will be held at 3:00 p.m. on Friday, March 11, 2005, in Tuktoyaktuk. On behalf of my family and constituents, our condolences, thoughts and prayers are with the family and friends of the late Edgar Kotokak.

Mr. Speaker, the other day, my colleague Mr. McLeod reported on the IRC Native Hockey Tournament. Today I would like to congratulate the Paulatuk Storms on their victory in the B division. Mr. Speaker, this tournament is of very high calibre. Young and old come out to participate and watch this tournament every February.

Mr. Speaker, Members may recall that during this session my niece Deva Lynn Pokiak watched the proceedings of the House from the gallery. Later that evening, Mr. Speaker, she asked me some interesting questions. She asked, why do they call the man in the front Mr. Speaker? Does he have a name? Referring to the Pages, she asked, why do the young people always bow their heads as they leave the House? Mr. Speaker, my niece found it very interesting and educational.

Mr. Speaker, Jackie Jacobson and I, on behalf of the residents of Tuktoyaktuk, will be hosting the next strategic planning meeting for the Accountability and Oversight committee in Tuktoyaktuk. The meeting will take place the same time as the Beluga Jamboree. I look forward to showing my AOC colleagues our community and I am confident that they will enjoy the warm hospitality of the people of Tuktoyaktuk during the jamboree.

In closing, Mr. Speaker, as we go on our own ways, I would like to wish all my colleagues a safe journey home to their loved ones. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear! Hear!

---Applause

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Pokiak. A reminder that Member's statements are to be on one topic; but, seeing as it is our last day, the man in the tux will be very obliging to you today.

---Laughter

Item 3, Members' statements. The honourable Member for Great Slave, Mr. Braden.

Member's Statement On Market Housing Initiative

MR. BRADEN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Today is indeed, or hopefully will be, the last day of this session.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Yay.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Nay.

MR. BRADEN: I deserved that, but I will try to forge on here. Mr. Speaker, it has been a long four weeks here, a productive four weeks. We have all had a chance to deliver our messages and I would like to return to the one that I believe is very, very high and should stay way up there on the priority list of this Assembly and especially this Cabinet, it is about the theme of housing.

---Applause

I have a bit of a message here. Members might be familiar with the tune and they are more than welcome to join me in this.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Ohhhhh.

MR. BRADEN: Mr. Speaker, Trailers for sale or rent...

SOME HON. MEMBERS: ...taxpayers' bucks are getting spent. Ministers with no plan, we call them Trailer Park Boys. The rent bill takes all my pay. Workers didn't have a say. Oh well, just another day. We call them, Trailer Park Boys. We tried everything to build a house in every town. Spent all sorts of money, but guess what we found? The market ain't there, but we'll try again. The nurses and teachers they'll all be our friends. So I say, trailers for sale or rent...

AN HON. MEMBER: Let's go.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: ...taxpayers' bucks are getting spent. Ministers with no plan. We call them, Trailer Park Boys.

MR. BRADEN: Everybody have a great spring and we will see you back here in May. Thank you.

---Applause

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Braden. Item 3, Members' statements. The honourable Member for Yellowknife Centre, Mr. Hawkins.

Member's Statement On Affirmative Action Policy Application

MR. HAWKINS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I wish to start off by officially saying that I will not be singing in any key...

---Applause

...but I do wish to rise and continue the spirit of serious disappointment in regard to non-northerners getting serious board appointments, jobs and lost opportunities that rightly belong to our northerners here.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear! Hear!

MR. HAWKINS: Mr. Speaker, I wish to add my voice to my colleague Mr. Robert Villeneuve, and I want to speak of my support for the affirmative action policy. I am in

support of the policy. I am a firm believer of providing opportunities to our northerners, born and bred, to our long-time residents and minority groups, so we can get them involved in the process of governing and running the territory. Mr. Speaker, the NWT is a fine example where policies such as ours are beneficial to the development and prosperity of all regions and our people.

The diverse makeup of our shared territory and the recent developments that will continue for many years to come in our North speak to the needs of having true northerners representing our workforce and our people. New perspectives and unique outlooks can provide many benefits to our communities, especially coming from people we know very well and respect. Mr. Speaker, representation of our people is a defining principle in democracy and I think it is important that we ensure that our affirmative action policy reflects that.

Mr. Speaker, I am a strong proponent for the idea of a hand-up, not a handout. So I believe the affirmative action policy, correctly implemented, will continue to provide great opportunities for young people for employment, people representing their people, young generations seeing true northerners as role models and inspirations for goodwill and accomplishment.

Mr. Speaker, I want to say, in closing, an affirmative action policy is no more simply put than it recognizes our people, community supporting community and finally we've got it right. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

---Applause

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Hawkins. Item 3, Members' statements. The honourable Member for Sahtu, Mr. Yakeleya.

Member's Statement On Spending Priorities

MR. YAKELEYA: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, a band called the Bare Naked Ladies sings a song called If I Had a Million Dollars. I've always liked the song, Mr. Speaker, so today I have my own version to share with this House.

---Laughter

---Applause

Unfortunately, Mr. Speaker, the rules of this House do not allow guitars or keyboards or even after hearing these backup singers...

---Laughter

...you'll have to bear with me.

Mr. Speaker, if I had a billion dollars, I would ask the elders' council what's best to do. I'll fund them for their wisdom and their view. I'll keep the elders in the Sahtu. I wouldn't ship them south, cause that's cruel.

---Laughter

If I had billion dollars, I'd speed up the chipsealing programs so the elders can greet you.

If I had a billion dollars, I'll contribute to the Chief T'Selehye and Chief Albert Wright schools, install water and sewer facilities in Colville too.

---Laughter

If I had a billion dollars, we'd build log houses, affordable housing so we wouldn't have to live 10 people to a house, cause that'll cause a health issue to you.

Mr. Speaker, if I had a billion dollars, I'd buy an all-weather road to wrap around the Sahtu and then I'd buy a

sack of potatoes cause I can finally afford to share them with me and you.

AN HON. MEMBER: Hear! Hear!

---Laughter

MR. YAKELEYA: Then I'll clean up the contaminated mountain in Tulita while I'm at it too, because that would be cool.

Mr. Speaker, if I had a billion dollars, I'd build a Mackenzie Valley office in the Sahtu. Cabinet could help with Inuvik too.

But if I had a billion dollars, I'd fund the treatment centres so we can all get well and if we could learn to build it ourselves, wouldn't that be swell.

Mr. Speaker, if I had a billion dollars, I'd get energy from the Bear, no more diesel generators, hydro is the way to go.

AN HON. MEMBER: Hear! Hear!

---Applause

MR. YAKELEYA: If I had a billion dollars, I'd host the International Dene Gathering in the Sahtu. I'd invite all my friends, and the Premier can come too.

---Laughter

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Whoa.

MR. YAKELEYA: If I had a billion dollars, I wouldn't forget the arts and crafts. Artists need raw materials and supplies and they need them fast because in Yellowknife tourism is getting to critical mass.

If I had a billion dollars, I'd support the trappers and their traditional lifestyle by buying everyone a fur coat, and that really isn't cruel. I'm not just thinking about the Sahtu, I'd buy for all the MLAs and their communities.

---Applause

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hey, hey.

MR. YAKELEYA: If I had a billion dollars, I'd give Nahanni a real gym.

---Applause

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Ho ho ho.

MR. YAKELEYA: Cause they don't have one yet, and Granny needs to dunk basketballs too.

---Laughter

And Dene K'onia staff would stay in Hay River and feed their children too. If I had a billion dollars, I'd build new courthouses in all the NWT communities.

---Laughter

AN HON. MEMBER: Whoa, no way!

MR. YAKELEYA: Mr. Speaker, if I had a billion dollars, we'd all be rich. Mahsi.

---Applause

AN HON. MEMBER: Alright.

---Applause

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Yakeleya. Your Speaker is certainly glad that this could be the last day.

---Laughter

Item 3, Members' statements. The honourable Premier, Mr. Handley.

Member's Statement On Broadband Business Alliance

HON. JOE HANDLEY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm not going to sing. I'd like to, but I won't. Mr. Speaker, today I would like to congratulate an aboriginal owned corporation with their offices in Weledeh. This afternoon I was told that because of the efforts of this company, that all communities in the NWT will, by the end of this year, have broadband Internet services.

---Applause

Mr. Speaker, the Denendeh Development Corporation is a community champion of the Broadband Business Alliance, and will be signing a contribution agreement with Industry Canada as part of an overall project worth \$16.7 million. This is the culmination of two years of effort by Denendeh Development Corporation and its five partners in the Broadband Business Alliance. The other partners in the alliance, Mr. Speaker, in addition to the Denendeh Development Corporation, are the Dogrib Treaty 11, Deline Land Corporation, Tetlit Gwich'in Council, Deninu Kue Development Corporation and Deh Cho Economic Corporation.

The Broadband Alliance will be using state-of-the-art satellite and wireless technology to connect 31 communities across the Territories. The benefits are many. This includes the support of value-added applications such as tele-health, tele-education and remote video conferencing. Training and capacity building will be provided by the Broadband Business Alliance.

Mr. Speaker, I'd like this House to congratulate the Broadband Business Alliance and its community champion, the Denendeh Development Corporation, for its efforts and perseverance in putting forth and making this technology available to the benefit of all northerners. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

---Applause

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Handley. Item 3, Members' statements. The honourable Member for Thebacha, Mr. Miltenberger.

Member's Statement On Fort Smith Volunteers

HON. MICHAEL MILTENBERGER: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, starting today in Fort Smith we will also be launching our annual carnival, the Wood Buffalo Frolics, and they'll be starting off with a feast tonight. I'll be home tomorrow to take part in the festivities over the weekend.

As Minister McLeod mentioned, the weekend after next we're having the first Northern Games in Fort Smith. I'd like to thank the Minister for his leadership on that issue but, most of all, like every community, I'd like to recognize the many volunteers that work tirelessly to make these events possible, that raise the quality of life for all of us and to give us activities that we would never have if we didn't have their services. So I invite everyone to come to the first NWT Games next weekend and all of you with your carnivals, have nothing but fun and today was obviously the best Member's statement day of the session.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear! Hear!

---Applause

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Miltenberger. Item 3, Members' statements. Item 4, reports of standing and special committees. Item 5, returns to oral questions.

The honourable Minister of Municipal and Community Affairs, Mr. McLeod.

ITEM 5: RETURNS TO ORAL QUESTIONS

Further Return To Question 426-15(3): Establishment Of Council Of Sport And Recreation Partners

HON. MICHAEL MCLEOD: Mr. Speaker, I have a return to oral question asked by Mr. Zoe on February 18, 2005, regarding the establishment of the Council of Sport and Recreation Partners.

Mr. Speaker, during the October 2004 session, I tabled the implementation schedule for the establishment of the Northwest Territories Council of Sport and Recreation Partners. I am pleased to report that the implementation process is proceeding as scheduled, and I expect that the council will hold its first annual general meeting in April 2005.

Further, I am pleased to report that all sport and recreation partners are fully involved in this process, and have contributed significantly to the successful steps taken to date.

The Member for North Slave also asked how the proceeds of the Western Canada Lottery Program will assist the council.

Mr. Speaker, in 2004, the Department of Municipal and Community Affairs, in cooperation with Sport North and the Department of Justice, completed a review of the Western Canada Lottery Act regulations. These regulations dictate how the Lottery Program must be conducted.

Mr. Speaker, once the Northwest Territories Council of Sport and Recreation Partners is established, it will implement a process of cooperative budget development, which will result in more resources being allocated to programs and less to administrative overlap or duplication among the various partners. The council will also be responsible for making recommendations on the allocation of the proceeds of the Western Canada Lottery Program. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. McLeod. Item 5, returns to oral questions. The honourable Minister responsible for the Workers' Compensation Board, Mr. Krutko.

Further Return To Question 497-15(3): WCB Appeals Tribunal

HON. DAVID KRUTKO: Mr. Speaker, I have a return to oral question asked by Mr. Braden on Monday, February 28, 2005, regarding the Workers' Compensation Board Appeals Tribunal.

How many cases are before the Appeals Tribunal today and what is the average turnover or turnaround in waiting times for those appeals?

The Appeals Tribunal currently has 23 cases before them. The average turnaround time has been 200 working days. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Krutko. Item 5, returns to oral questions. Item 6, recognition of visitors in the gallery. The honourable Minister of Justice, Mr. Dent.

ITEM 6: RECOGNITION OF VISITORS IN THE GALLERY

HON. CHARLES DENT: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. As I noted earlier today in my statement, we've been celebrating the 50th anniversary of the Supreme Court of the Northwest Territories. To mark the occasion, there's

been a conference in town from the 8th through today, and with us today in the gallery we have 20 judges who have been participating in the conference. I'd like to introduce them. We have Justice Ted Richard from the Northwest Territories.

---Applause

We have Justice John Vertes from the Northwest Territories.

---Applause

We have Justice Virginia Schuler from the Northwest Territories.

---Applause

From Nunavut we have Justice Beverly Browne...

---Applause

...and Justice Rob Kilpatrick...

---Applause

...and Justice Earl Johnson.

---Applause

From the Yukon we have Justice Ron Veale...

---Applause

...and Justice Leigh Gower.

---Applause

With us also is Justice C. Scott Brooker from Alberta.

---Applause

Justice Wallace Darichuk from Manitoba.

---Applause

Justice Howard Irving from Alberta.

---Applause

Justice Arthur Lutz from Alberta.

---Applause

Justice Ernest Marshall from Alberta.

---Applause

Justice John O'Flynn from Ontario.

---Applause

Justice Rejean Paul from Quebec.

---Applause

Justice Peter Power from Alberta.

---Applause

Justice Joanne Veit from Alberta.

---Applause

Justice Randall Wong from B.C.

---Applause

Justice Mary Moreau from Alberta...

---Applause

...and Justice Vital Ouellette from Alberta.

---Applause

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Dent. Item 6, recognition of visitors in the gallery. The honourable Member for Great Slave, Mr. Braden.

MR. BRADEN: Mr. Speaker, I, too, would like to welcome all of the judges, especially a friend from my days in the Yukon, Justice Ron Veale. Mr. Speaker, I would also like to recognize a constituent, an injured worker and a great advocate on behalf of injured workers, Mr. John Huffman.

---Applause

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Braden. Item 6, recognition of visitors in the gallery. The honourable Member for Range Lake, Ms. Lee.

MS. LEE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. As a Member of this House and a very proud non-practicing member of the bar, may I take this opportunity also to welcome all of the justices and I have appeared before some of them and I dream about appearing before them in my other times. I'd like to just welcome all the justices. Thank you.

---Applause

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Ms. Lee. Item 6, recognition of visitors in the gallery. The honourable Member for Nunakput, Mr. Pokiak.

MR. POKIAK: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. There is someone very special and dear to me in the gallery today. Mr. Speaker, behind every man there's a good woman.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear! Hear!

---Applause

It's been 27 years and counting. I'd like to recognize my wife, Lucille Pokiak, in the gallery. Thank you.

---Applause

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Pokiak. Item 6, recognition of visitors in the gallery. The honourable Member for Sahtu, Mr. Yakeleya.

MR. YAKELEYA: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I, too, want to recognize all the judges in the gallery here. Also, I want to make special mention to Justice Earl Johnson from Nunavut, who's in the gallery. I'd also like to recognize Paul Andrew who is from CBC and also my home town of Tulita. I'd also like to recognize Betty Quitte from Yellowknife.

---Applause

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Yakeleya. Item 6, recognition of visitors in the gallery. The honourable Member for North Slave, Mr. Zoe.

MR. ZOE: Thank you. Mr. Speaker, I, too, would like to recognize a former resident of my constituency of Rae Lakes, Ms. Betty Quitte. Thank you.

---Applause

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Zoe. Item 6, recognition of visitors in the gallery. If there's anyone that was missed in the gallery today, I'd like to recognize my executive assistant in the gallery today, Ms...

---Laughter

Sue Tkachuk.

---Applause

If we've missed anyone else in the gallery today, welcome to the gallery. It's always nice to see an audience in the gallery overlooking our proceedings. Item 7, oral questions. The honourable Member for Sahtu, Mr. Yakeleya.

ITEM 7: ORAL QUESTIONS

Question 583-15(3): Jackfish Creek Bridge Repair

MR. YAKELEYA: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, there's a saying that London Bridge is falling down, London Bridge is falling down, but in the Sahtu, our Jackfish Creek Bridge is falling down. So I want to ask the Minister of Transportation, last spring in 2004 the Jackfish Creek Bridge was damaged and was unsafe to use. That closed the airport down for several days and caused an emergency in Fort Good Hope. Almost one year and the bridge still has not been worked on. I want to ask the Minister if he could advise me and the people in the Sahtu, especially those in Fort Good Hope, when this bridge is going to be up and running before the winter road is closed. Mahsi.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Yakeleya. The honourable Minister of Transportation, Mr. McLeod.

Return To Question 583-15(3): Jackfish Creek Bridge Repair

HON. MICHAEL MCLEOD: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I guess first of all we have to offer an apology to the community of Fort Good Hope and also the Member because I had reassured him that this bridge would be up and running once the winter road was open, and the winter road has been open for some time. We've run into some difficulties with the Jackfish Creek Bridge. We've had to go out to tender on two different occasions and on both occasions we haven't been able to attract a successful company to come in to do this work. What we have done is broken the contract up into a number of different areas and we will oversee it as a department and we are proceeding with the work as we speak. I think some of the work has already started. Most of the contracts have been awarded. There are still a few that we are working on, but our plan is to have the bridge up and running before the end of this winter road season. Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. McLeod. Supplementary, Mr. Yakeleya.

Supplementary To Question 583-15(3): Jackfish Creek Bridge Repair

MR. YAKELEYA: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I appreciate the answer from the Minister. Can the Minister provide some assurance to the people in Fort Good Hope that there are emergency plans in case the bridge doesn't get up and is usable, that the airport will not be closed for a couple days in terms of the work that's supposed to get done by the close of the winter season? Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Yakeleya. Mr. McLeod.

Further Return To Question 583-15(3): Jackfish Creek Bridge Repair

HON. MICHAEL MCLEOD: Mr. Speaker, we're very confident we're going to have all this work done. We're going to a completely different design than we had used initially. We're quite comfortable with the fact that we're going to have all this work in place. We will have the bridge up and operating by the end of the month. We should not have any need for different options for a bridge, but if that is the case we will reassure the community that there will be access to the airport in some form or another. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. McLeod. Supplementary, Mr. Yakeleya.

Supplementary To Question 583-15(3): Jackfish Creek Bridge Repair

MR. YAKELEYA: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I've seen some e-mails from members of the community of Fort Good Hope and they're indicating that the water flow is above the bridge or close to the bridge and they're afraid that because of the next couple of days the weather is going to be warming up and they're afraid there might be an overflow and the bridge will be unusable. Is there any indication from the Minister in terms of an emergency response plan in terms of the communities having access to the airport outside access to the winter road that goes out of town? Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Yakeleya. Mr. McLeod.

Further Return To Question 583-15(3): Jackfish Creek Bridge Repair

HON. MICHAEL MCLEOD: Mr. Speaker, we are aware that there is some problem with overflow at the present time. We are looking at the situation. We don't anticipate it to be a problem that will slow down the project and we're hoping everything will go smoothly, but we will get back to the Member to talk about how we will deal with it if it comes to an emergency situation. Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. McLeod. Final supplementary, Mr. Yakeleya.

Supplementary To Question 583-15(3): Jackfish Creek Bridge Repair

MR. YAKELEYA: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, the Minister indicated until the end of the winter season, so can he inform the people in Fort Good Hope and the Sahtu when that might be in terms of the winter road so they could do some planning? I know there's some nervousness in terms of using that bridge. When can the people in the Sahtu and Fort Good Hope look at the closing of the winter road season in terms of the bridge situation? Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Yakeleya. Mr. McLeod.

Further Return To Question 583-15(3): Jackfish Creek Bridge Repair

HON. MICHAEL MCLEOD: Mr. Speaker, yesterday in our budgeting process we approved some money to extend the season. Our target date for the extension of the road is to the end of March. It will all be conditional on weather and it will be day by day. So if the weather cooperates, we should have the road stay open until the end of the month. Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. McLeod. Item 7, oral questions. The honourable Member for Nahendeh, Mr. Menicoche.

Question 584-15(3): Planning For Infrastructure In Small Communities

MR. MENICOCHÉ: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise today with questions for the Minister of MACA. I sent a question down to research and they advised me that I had mentioned Nahanni Butte 54 times, the gymnasium 29 times, so all together that's 83 times. That's almost once for every constituent in Nahanni Butte, Mr. Speaker...

---Applause

...except I'm missing three constituents, so I'm going to have to conclude this sitting by asking three more questions of the Minister.

---Laughter

Begging the chair's indulgence, I said I am astounded five times, so I'm going to have to say that two more times, because there are seven Ministers sitting over there.

---Laughter

With respect to that, can the Minister inform me what has been done to date with respect to allocating or planning for the infrastructure funding for the smaller communities? Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Menicoche. The honourable Minister of Municipal and Community Affairs, Mr. McLeod.

Return To Question 584-15(3): Planning For Infrastructure In Small Communities

HON. MICHAEL MCLEOD: Mr. Speaker, I am astounded that the Member would ask the same question so many times.

---Laughter

Mr. Speaker, we realize the sense of urgency that some of the Members are experiencing in wanting to get some of the answers. Our staff has been working on drafting some of the criteria that we will be using. We have had some early discussions with the NWT Association of Communities. We are still working on some of the other funding initiatives. We plan to have our MRIF funding and our gas tax all in place by some time this year, so there's a lot of work we have to do. We have scheduled a number of meetings with the NWT Association of Communities over the next little while, and we are still targeting to have some information to give to the Members so that they know, even if it's early indicators of where we're going. We have a lot of work to do in terms of reviewing what all the information is, all the projects that were in the capital plan and some that were not in the different areas that have been brought forward as a priority by some of the Members. So we are trying to package all of that up as fast as we can so we can have some information for the Members. Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. McLeod. Supplementary, Mr. Menicoche.

Supplementary To Question 584-15(3): Planning For Infrastructure In Small Communities

MR. MENICOCHÉ: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I, too, am astounded how many times I hear the same answer. Just with respect to that, Mr. Speaker, if the Minister can just tell me again...I'm travelling to Nahanni next week. What pray do I tell the people and the students and the children in Nahanni Butte? Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Menicoche. Mr. McLeod.

Further Return To Question 584-15(3): Planning For Infrastructure In Small Communities

HON. MICHAEL MCLEOD: Mr. Speaker, I guess I would advise the Member to tell the members of Nahanni Butte he has raised the issue of the Nahanni Butte gym I forget how many times, but he certainly can feel comfortable assuring them that he has brought that matter to the attention of our department and this government. We are looking at the whole issue of recreation facilities in small communities. It seems this has become a high priority. It's an issue that we have not been able to invest in for some time. So we will be giving strong consideration to the recreation facilities and facilities in general to the smaller communities that are experiencing some difficulty.

So all those things we will be looking into and have some answers for the community and for the Member by the end of this month or early into April. Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. McLeod. Item 7, oral questions. The honourable Member for Hay River South, Mrs. Groenewegen.

Question 585-15(3): Closure Of The South Mackenzie Correctional Centre Remand Unit

MRS. GROENEWEGEN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, my questions today are going to be for the Premier of the Northwest Territories. Mr. Speaker, this is my last opportunity in this session to talk about the closure of the South Mackenzie Correctional Centre remand unit in Hay River. Mr. Speaker, soon Regular Members will be out of sight and out of mind, and I'm afraid the Premier and the Justice Minister are going to forget about me.

---Laughter

AN HON. MEMBER: They never would.

MRS. GROENEWEGEN: Mr. Speaker, I have compiled every word I have said on the remand centre during session, and I put it into a binder with my picture on the front.

---Laughter

Mr. Speaker, I'm going to present this as a parting gift to the Premier, and I would like to know if he would take the time to re-read and reassess what I had to say about the remand centre. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

---Applause

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mrs. Groenewegen. The honourable Premier, Mr. Handley.

Return To Question 585-15(3): Closure Of The South Mackenzie Correctional Centre Remand Unit

HON. JOE HANDLEY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I am just overwhelmed with the gift.

---Laughter

Mr. Speaker, yes, I will definitely read the document. Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Handley. Supplementary, Mrs. Groenewegen.

Supplementary To Question 585-15(3): Closure Of The South Mackenzie Correctional Centre Remand Unit

MRS. GROENEWEGEN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. In all seriousness, if the Premier feels compelled by the arguments that have been made and the comments and the positions that have been taken by all the Members on this side of the House, their comments are also in here and excerpts from Hansard. If he feels compelled to do so, as a result of re-reading this, would he consider bringing the remand closure back to FMB and consider reinstating those funds? Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mrs. Groenewegen. Mr. Handley.

Further Return To Question 585-15(3): Closure Of The South Mackenzie Correctional Centre Remand Unit

HON. JOE HANDLEY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Yes, I will and I believe there was a recommendation to that effect to bring it back, so it will be brought back. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Handley. Supplementary, Mrs. Groenewegen.

Supplementary To Question 585-15(3): Closure Of The South Mackenzie Correctional Centre Remand Unit

MRS. GROENEWEGEN: My last supplementary on this, Mr. Speaker, is I would just like to ask the Premier if he would keep me and my constituents apprised of any movement or decision on this, as there are many people in Hay River very anxiously waiting to hear if the government will respond to the position taken by the Members and myself in this House. Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mrs. Groenewegen. Mr. Handley.

Further Return To Question 585-15(3): Closure Of The South Mackenzie Correctional Centre Remand Unit

HON. JOE HANDLEY: Yes, Mr. Speaker, I expect that the recommendations from the committees will be reviewed at the next regular FMB meeting, and either myself or the chair of the Financial Management Board, our Minister of Finance, will certainly apprise the Member. Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Handley. Item 7, oral questions. The honourable Member for Kam Lake, Mr. Ramsay.

Question 586-15(3): Appointment Of The Mackenzie Valley Land And Water Board Chairperson

MR. RAMSAY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, my questions are for the Premier. It goes back to my Member's statement that I made earlier. I know that the Premier and his government have worked very hard on trying to establish a relationship with Ottawa in an effort to try to get a resource revenue and devolution deal, a deal that the last government and many governments before it have failed to do. I felt sorry for the Premier and his government yesterday with the action that Minister Scott took in appointing a non-northerner, non-nominee to the chair of the Mackenzie Valley Land and Water Board. I would like to ask the Premier if he has spoken to Minister Scott and what are the reasons that Minister Scott has given the Premier and the Government of the Northwest Territories as to why he did what he did. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Ramsay. The honourable Premier, Mr. Handley.

Return To Question 586-15(3): Appointment Of The Mackenzie Valley Land And Water Board Chairperson

HON. JOE HANDLEY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Let me say first of all, that the appointment of the chair for either of the boards under the Mackenzie Valley Management Act is the responsibility of the federal government. So, Mr. Speaker, having said that, as I said yesterday, I have communicated my preferences to Minister Scott in the past, I have written a letter to him, and last week I attempted to contact him -- I believe it was on Thursday -- and waited for his call. Yesterday I tried to contact him. I did not get to speak to him. I was told that he's in Edmonton or in Alberta today for the memorial for the RCMP officers, but that he would get back to me tomorrow. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Handley. Supplementary, Mr. Ramsay.

Supplementary To Question 586-15(3): Appointment Of The Mackenzie Valley Land And Water Board Chairperson

MR. RAMSAY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I can understand that the decision is a federal appointment, but in the spirit of good faith between the federal government and our government, I would expect that they would at least have the courtesy to phone our Premier and find out what the political agenda is here and work with that. I'm wondering if the Premier can let us know how the appointment was made. Was it Minister Scott's call directly, or was the Secretary of State for Northern Development involved, and that happens to be our MP, in this decision? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Ramsay. Mr. Handley.

Further Return To Question 586-15(3): Appointment Of The Mackenzie Valley Land And Water Board Chairperson

HON. JOE HANDLEY: Mr. Speaker, I can say that I was very surprised, taken aback; in fact angry, yesterday, when I found out, when it was on the 5:30 news, that CBC had gotten this information before we did, before I did and before anybody in our government did. Mr. Speaker, I don't know for sure who was involved in the announcement, if it was an announcement made. CBC certainly had it. But I did, as well as calling Minister Scott, call our MP and Minister for Northern Development, Ethel Blondin-Andrew. She called me back this morning and certainly apologized for not letting us know. She explained that she thought that we had been told and agreed that from here on she was going to be more diligent in making sure the department is letting us know ahead of time before we hear this sort of thing through the media. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Handley. Supplementary, Mr. Ramsay.

Supplementary To Question 586-15(3): Appointment Of The Mackenzie Valley Land And Water Board Chairperson

MR. RAMSAY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. That gives us little comfort, I guess. What is done is done. I am wondering, perhaps, as a government, we could look at writing a letter and maybe the Premier's office can put together a letter and each and every one of us Members in this 15th Legislative Assembly could sign it, outlining our concern over how this appointment was made and the fact that we had to find out on the 5:30 news last evening that the appointment was made before even the Premier knew about it. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Ramsay. The honourable Premier, Mr. Handley.

Further Return To Question 586-15(3): Appointment Of The Mackenzie Valley Land And Water Board Chairperson

HON. JOE HANDLEY: Mr. Speaker, I will certainly talk to the Members about that and consider doing a letter which either I would send or could be sent by all Members. This cannot continue to happen, Mr. Speaker. This is why we have to have devolution, because we cannot have these kinds of decisions being made in Ottawa and us finding out after the fact that the decision was made, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, fortunately, Minister Scott is going to be here next week. I think all of us will have an opportunity to

speak with him. I certainly will speak with him about the way this was handled. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Handley. Item 7, oral questions. The honourable Member for Tu Nedhe, Mr. Villeneuve.

Question 587-15(3): Management Assignment Program

MR. VILLENEUVE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, yesterday when I asked the Minister responsible for the FMBS if he would consider striking the Affirmative Action Advisory Committee, he advised me that he was not willing to do this because, in his opinion, he did not want to interrupt the healthy and positive process that is currently underway and that he had an agreement with his colleagues at FMBS. Is the Minister suggesting that a plan put together by a few people in FMBS, who we still don't know who they are, that has been approved by FMBS, should not be the subject of scrutiny by what I feel would be an unbiased objective and independent panel of qualified individuals? Mahsi, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Villeneuve. The honourable Minister responsible for the Financial Management Board, Mr. Roland.

Return To Question 587-15(3): Management Assignment Program

HON. FLOYD ROLAND: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, scrutiny of what Members of FMB decide should not happen on this floor, as Members have been questioning us to the integrity of what has been happening. As I informed the Member and other Members on this issue, that once we have got a plan together to move forward, we would be bringing it to committee. In fact, a document will be going to committee in the very near future about where things are going right now and what our plans are for trying to improve our system. Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Roland. Supplementary, Mr. Villeneuve.

Supplementary To Question 587-15(3): Management Assignment Program

MR. VILLENEUVE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I look forward to the plan when it does come to committee. Just on the affirmative action policy, Mr. Speaker, the honourable Minister Roland did mention that the MAP program and the applicants that the MAP program does accept undergo a rigorous assessment process. Mr. Speaker, I understand part of the process is a series of tests. Will the Minister confirm that these tests that are there for the northern applicants were actually designed by a highly-paid consultant from the South who doesn't even live in the North, Mr. Speaker? Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Villeneuve. Mr. Roland.

Further Return To Question 587-15(3): Management Assignment Program

HON. FLOYD ROLAND: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I will go back and see where the assessment was put together; if it was, in fact, from a consultant whether northern or southern. I think it is important to remember, whether you are north or south, your ability to get the job should be one of the most important measurements taken. Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Roland. Supplementary, Mr. Villeneuve.

Supplementary To Question 587-15(3): Management Assignment Program

MR. VILLENEUVE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I understand that the assessment process also involves gathering of information from up to 15 peers. These 15 peers are allowed to provide some comments anonymously on a person's application. To me, Mr. Speaker, this sounds like a very subjective process with no accountability. We have talked about transparency in the human resources department. Can the Minister explain that this is obviously a non-transparent process and what will he do to address the process of screening applicants to make it more transparent? Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Villeneuve. Mr. Roland.

Further Return To Question 587-15(3): Management Assignment Program

HON. FLOYD ROLAND: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, once again, the area of the MAP program is being looked at to see how we can open it up and ensure that northern residents are having a fair opportunity to advance within the government. As we go through this first issue we have to deal with around human resources, we will be able then to take on these other areas with more horsepower, I guess you can say, to begin to look at this and hopefully bring solutions to Members of this House and to our workforce. Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Roland. Final supplementary, Mr. Villeneuve.

Supplementary To Question 587-15(3): Management Assignment Program

MR. VILLENEUVE: Mahsi, Mr. Speaker. I just want to ask the final supplementary of Minister Roland that the information that was gathered from the 140 people that were interviewed and applied for the MAP program, if that information is available to Members. If not, why not? Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Villeneuve. Mr. Roland.

Further Return To Question 587-15(3): Management Assignment Program

HON. FLOYD ROLAND: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, on many occasions when we are looking at gathering information, whether it is about a program or survey affecting employees, we tend to try and have one section of that being open for anybody to make comment. Some people are very concerned that they may say something that would be brought back to bear on them as they are in the workforce. So there are some sections of our internal surveys that employees are told right off at the start that there is a confidentiality portion. We will have to look at that as we go through this. So with the information of what the Member is raising here, I will take that information, go back and see, in fact, what the process is and what happens with that information. Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Roland. Item 7, oral questions. The honourable Member for Great Slave, Mr. Braden.

Question 588-15(3): Shared Affiliations With The United States

MR. BRADEN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My questions this afternoon are for the Premier in his capacity as the Minister responsible for Intergovernmental Affairs. Mr. Speaker, I would like to acknowledge the visit to the Northwest Territories over the last couple of days of Naim

Ahmed, the consulate general from the American consulate in Calgary to the Northwest Territories, and the initiative that the American government has taken to create virtual consulates on the web site for the Northwest Territories as well as Nunavut and the Yukon. As we have heard this afternoon, Mr. Speaker, sometimes we wonder whether we are on Ottawa's radar screen. At least we know that we are on Washington's through this move.

Mr. Speaker, our site is among, I understand, 30 of these virtual sites that the American government has set up. I would like to ask the Premier about a reference to significant associations in educational, trade and military areas that the American consulate has proposed we share. I would also suggest, Mr. Speaker, that we share significant associations in the areas of energy, missile defence, caribou and their migration into the ANWR range and freshwater. Mr. Speaker, does this mean that the NWT is now part of American foreign policy? Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Braden. The honourable Premier, Mr. Handley.

Return To Question 588-15(3): Shared Affiliations With The United States

HON. JOE HANDLEY: Mr. Speaker, I can't speak for the consulate general or for the ambassador and their motivation setting up the virtual consulate. They do, I assume, want to share information and be able to communicate. Mr. Speaker, in my view, we are clearly not part of American foreign policy. We have our own views, our own government and federal government. That is where our interests and our loyalty lie.

Mr. Speaker, we do have issues though, that we must deal with, with our neighbours. Those are issues like climate change, environment and, as the Member has said, caribou migrations and sovereignty and security and so on. There are things that we should be exchanging.

Mr. Speaker, we have to recognize that we are very, very much a part of a global communication system. Internet has done that for us and I think this is one more step the American government has taken. The sites they have are across Canada, not just for the Northwest Territories, by the way, Mr. Speaker. Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Handley. Supplementary, Mr. Braden.

Supplementary To Question 588-15(3): Shared Affiliations With The United States

MR. BRADEN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I appreciate the Premier's inclusion of a number of areas of international concern and interest that we share. I wanted to ask the Premier if he would undertake to create a dialogue that we could have directly, as people of the Northwest Territories, with the American people and their officials on these significant associations. Certainly I would put caribou, missile defence and, in the not-too-distant future, Mr. Speaker, what will be a contentious issue; that of fresh water. Can the Premier help us get together with the Americans and talk about these issues? Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Braden. Mr. Handley.

Further Return To Question 588-15(3): Shared Affiliations With The United States

HON. JOE HANDLEY: Mr. Speaker, I would be pleased to do that and in fact Mr. Speaker, I did go over to Sir John Franklin High School yesterday to take part in the orientation for the students and the introduction of this

virtual consulate. I did take the opportunity, even though I didn't want to hone in on the students' projects too much, to send a message to Ambassador Cellucci and I did, while waiting there, get a reply from him, as did a number of students.

Mr. Speaker, I think all northerners, if they have questions and they want to make their views known, should access the site; it is there. I don't have the Internet address for it right now, but I would be happy to share that with Members as well, if you want to communicate with the American consulate in Ottawa. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Handley. Supplementary, Mr. Braden.

Supplementary To Question 588-15(3): Shared Affiliations With The United States

MR. BRADEN: Mr. Speaker, I very much look forward to the opportunity to take these issues on with our American friends. I do call them friends; our nations do have their differences, but we have so much in common. This is where I wanted to ask too of the potential that this web site has to engage in even greater trade and exchange. The American market is the world's biggest consumer of energy and diamonds, we've got lots of that, and they are great consumers of our hunting and fishing products. Can we use this new link, Mr. Speaker, to further share in our interests with the Americans for those products on the market? Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Braden. Mr. Handley.

Further Return To Question 588-15(3): Shared Affiliations With The United States

HON. JOE HANDLEY: Mr. Speaker, I am sure we can, because it is open and...Of course, the communications are through the embassy, but I am sure that they would, at our request, forward these on to other people who may have interest in it as well.

Mr. Speaker, it's a good tool to use. I think that one drawback that I saw yesterday is that anyone else who wants to log on can also view your dialogue that is taking place. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Handley. Final supplementary, Mr. Braden.

Supplementary To Question 588-15(3): Shared Affiliations With The United States

MR. BRADEN: Mr. Speaker, the on-line chat sites and dialogues that go on serve a certain purpose. I am wondering, in light of the fact that His Excellency Mr. Cellucci is, I understand, soon going to be retiring as the ambassador to Canada, we will have a new American ambassador. Would the Premier consider being among the first in Canada to extend an invitation for the new American ambassador to visit the Northwest Territories in person? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Braden. Mr. Handley.

Further Return To Question 588-15(3): Shared Affiliations With The United States

HON. JOE HANDLEY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Yes, I am very interested in who the new ambassador will be. The announcement is, I understand, to be made in the next week or two and I have been working very closely with the Consul General. I might add that this is the second trip that the Consul General has made since his appointment several months ago. He was here in November and he is back here again, so there is definitely

very much interest by the American government in the potential for tourism, mining, diamonds, oil and gas and so on in the Northwest Territories. We want to keep up that relationship. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Handley. Item 7, oral questions. The honourable Member for Range Lake, Ms. Lee.

Question 589-15(3): Women And Children's Healing And Recovery Program

MS. LEE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My questions today are for the Minister of Health and Social Services, further to my statement. Mr. Speaker, I believe, by all accounts, the Women and Children's Healing and Recovery Program being delivered by YWCA is very well regarded. I believe that the Minister thinks of this program really well, as well.

We have learned lately that this program may be halved in its funding and I know that any kind of decisions like that have been done by mistake. I know that if the Minister knew that this was going to be the impact of his budget cuts, this is not what he would have supported, because I know that Cabinet and government understand that this is a very important program. Could I ask the Minister whether he would be prepared to see if the cuts to this program being proposed could be minimized or less than what is proposed? Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Ms. Lee. The Minister of Health and Social Services, Mr. Miltenberger.

Return To Question 589-15(3): Women And Children's Healing And Recovery Program

HON. MICHAEL MILTENBERGER: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. There were cuts proposed that were laid out in our business plan and in the draft main estimates; the details which were shared fully with the committees. It was also initially reviewed by the COs and the authorities and we reviewed the areas where we anticipated we could meet the targets that we set as a department.

Mr. Speaker, with regard to the specific cuts to Yellowknife; there were some cuts to the wellness funding, but Yellowknife Health and Social Services has about a \$33 million budget. They already inject additional funds over and above what wellness funding is there. There have also been meetings with NGOs in the community, but there is sufficient latitude. If Yellowknife Health and Social Services determines within their global budget that they want to identify funds within that \$33 million, they have the capacity to do that. Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Miltenberger. Supplementary, Ms. Lee.

Supplementary To Question 589-15(3): Women And Children's Healing And Recovery Program

MS. LEE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. What the Minister has just stated has always been my understanding, but my information is that the Health and Social Services Authority is not willing to use any of their global budget to enhance this program. I could also tell you, Mr. Speaker, in all of the discussions that we had in Social Programs committee or in any other areas, it was always understood that any reductions that we were agreeing to were monies that were not being used. It was money that -- what is the formal name for that -- was underused. The funding for this program was at \$554,000; it was my understanding that the cut would be as much as what was not used last

year, but the information that I now have is that the program is being cut by half of what they need.

I don't know if the Minister understands, but I don't believe it was ever understood that we would agree to that much of a cut. This program is being cut by half of what they have spent. My understanding was that they were being cut for what they didn't use. Could the Minister revisit this? Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Ms. Lee. Mr. Miltenberger.

Further Return To Question 589-15(3): Women And Children's Healing And Recovery Program

HON. MICHAEL MILTENBERGER: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I would be happy to review and take the concerns of the Member to the Yellowknife Health and Social Services Authority. As I have indicated, they have already had meetings with the various NGOs and their own officials to look at the targets and the budget figures that we have for the coming year. At the Member's request, I would be happy to visit that with the Health and Social Services Authority for Yellowknife. Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Miltenberger. Supplementary, Ms. Lee.

Supplementary To Question 589-15(3): Women And Children's Healing And Recovery Program

MS. LEE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I appreciate the Minister's commitment to do that and I think that the Minister understands that the Social Programs committee cooperated with the Minister with regard to many of the budget items. I would be the first one to admit that this was one of them. It was always understood that this program was funded for \$550,000 or near there last year and that they only spent \$350,000, so we agreed that for any amount that they didn't spend, we would agree to cut that.

What I am understanding now is that the funding will only be half of the \$350,000 needed, which will only be \$180,000. Would the Minister talk to the board about reinstating that \$180,000? Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Ms. Lee. Mr. Miltenberger.

Further Return To Question 589-15(3): Women And Children's Healing And Recovery Program

HON. MICHAEL MILTENBERGER: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Clearly, the authority has significant flexibility in some areas when it comes to funding and the \$33 million that they administer. They have made some determinations already. They've met with the NGOs but, as I just indicated to the Member, I will talk to our department and we will get in touch with Yellowknife Health and Social Services on this issue.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Miltenberger. Final supplementary, Ms. Lee.

Supplementary To Question 589-15(3): Women And Children's Healing And Recovery Program

MS. LEE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I believe the Minister understands better than anyone else how hard it is to manage a health budget. The Minister continuously comes back here for supplementary funding. It is not reasonable to expect a health board to eat up a cost like this. I would just like to get a commitment from the Minister that he would ask the board to find the money from within. If not, would the Minister consider helping them out a little bit?

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Ms. Lee. Mr. Miltenberger.

Further Return To Question 589-15(3): Women And Children's Healing And Recovery Program

HON. MICHAEL MILTENBERGER: Mr. Speaker, this particular area of reduction, about \$900,000 and some, was spread across all the boards and authorities across the Northwest Territories. So I will raise the issue with the Yellowknife Health and Social Services Authority, but clearly if there is any move on this, it will have to be territory-wide because it would be unfair to assume there would be any less problem or suffering or difficulty in Inuvik or any other authority. However, I will raise the issue with the Yellowknife Health and Social Services keeping in mind that they have a \$33 million budget. Stanton has about \$60 million and some, so basically there is about \$100 million in health and social services dollars located in Yellowknife. This is an overall cut of about \$600,000. The board has made the determination of how they want to deal with that, but I will revisit it with the board. Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Miltenberger. Item 7, oral questions. The honourable Member for Nunakput, Mr. Pokiak.

Question 590-15(3): New Deal For Community Governments

MR. POKIAK: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My question today is for the Minister of Municipal and Community Affairs, the Honourable Michael McLeod. Earlier, the Minister announced a new deal for community governments. Included in the budget, Mr. Speaker, there was \$1 million allocated to identify, consult and plan for the use of the enhanced deal. Can the Minister provide more detail on how this money will be spent? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Pokiak. The honourable Minister of Municipal and Community Affairs, Mr. McLeod.

Return To Question 590-15(3): New Deal For Community Governments

HON. MICHAEL MCLEOD: Mr. Speaker, the Member is correct; there is some money identified for planning and consultation of \$1 million for this upcoming fiscal year. It's to give us some resources to have a consultation process with the communities. We would be able to talk to the community leaders and it would also allow us to talk to some SAOs at some of the different criteria we are looking at and some of the projects in the capital plan and have a good thorough discussion on the needs of the communities out there. Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. McLeod. Supplementary, Mr. Pokiak.

Supplementary To Question 590-15(3): New Deal For Community Governments

MR. POKIAK: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Presently, my understanding is that most communities have a community plan in place or they have five-year capital plans. Why would the department want to consult and plan when there are plans in place for five-year capital plans in the communities? Why not take some of that money and put some other plans in place that are already identified? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Pokiak. Mr. McLeod.

Further Return To Question 590-15(3): New Deal For Community Governments

HON. MICHAEL MCLEOD: Mr. Speaker, it's important that the community recognize that under the new deal, we are looking at allocating money directly to the communities as part of community infrastructure. For us, historically, that has been a fairly small amount. It was anywhere between \$13 million and \$17 million. As part of the new deal, this government has decided to increase that amount to a \$25 million pot that will be accessible to communities.

Throughout the years as our plan has evolved, a lot of projects that historically used to be involved were not accepted, especially in areas like recreation projects and a lot of other initiatives that communities may desire to put in a community. So we have to make sure that communities are aware of what our initiative is, are aware of what we are planning to do with the new deal, are aware of the new funding that's coming forward under MRIF and also the gas tax, so we can have discussions around all these issues to ensure that communities don't come back and say we didn't think that was allowed under the planning. We want to make sure everybody is involved, including the SAOs, that everybody has a chance to have their say. That's why we are doing it. Some projects have not been high priority anymore. That may change and I think we need to be inclusive of all the communities. So that's what we are trying to do. Thanks.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. McLeod. Supplementary, Mr. Pokiak.

Supplementary To Question 590-15(3): New Deal For Community Governments

MR. POKIAK: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I am still not convinced, Mr. Speaker, that \$1 million in communities does about 500 cubic metres of gravel to do our roads in Tuk or erosion programs. I understand what the Minister is saying. When can this \$1 million be available to communities? When can the department identify these needs for the communities?

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Pokiak. Mr. McLeod.

Further Return To Question 590-15(3): New Deal For Community Governments

HON. MICHAEL MCLEOD: Mr. Speaker, we should be clear that the \$1 million is for planning and consultation and not for actual capital projects. The capital dollars allocated for next year are around \$17 million. We are planning in 2006-07 to increase the capital budget for communities to \$25 million. So we have to get out there. We have to make sure everybody is included in the discussions, everybody is consulted, everybody knows what the game plan is, so they can tell us what projects are out there and why they want to deal with certain initiatives in the communities. That is what those dollars are for. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. McLeod. Item 7, oral questions. The honourable Member for Sahtu, Mr. Yakeleya.

Question 591-15(3): University And College Entrance Program

MR. YAKELEYA: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, last week, I raised the issue of access to federal funding for the University and College Entry Program, known as the UCEP program. The Minister of Education, Culture and Employment made a commitment to speak with the

federal government about the discriminatory nature of the program towards individuals of Metis heritage. I have follow-up questions for the Minister of Education, Culture and Employment. Given that there are more people, both status and non-status, to access the UCEP program than there is space and given that it may take some time before the federal government will align the federal criteria to recognize the rights of Metis people which have already been recognized and integrated into many federal program areas, will the Minister consider finding the resources to increase the capacity of programs immediately and will the government show leadership to the federal government by permitting Metis access to spaces in the program? Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Yakeleya. The honourable Minister of Education, Culture and Employment, Mr. Dent.

Return To Question 591-15(3): University And College Entrance Program

HON. CHARLES DENT: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I can certainly consider putting extra money to support students to access programs into the business plan and take a look at how much support we have for that approach. I am prepared next week, when Mr. Scott is here, to raise the issue with the Minister. I would hope that the federal government would recognize their responsibility and live up to their responsibilities by putting some money into the program to deal with the current demands just from status people and that they would also fund the program so that Metis people could access it.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Dent. Supplementary, Mr. Yakeleya.

Supplementary To Question 591-15(3): University And College Entrance Program

MR. YAKELEYA: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the Minister's commitment to go to bat in terms of getting extra funding for the Metis people. Mr. Speaker, can the Minister inform the House about how the UCEP program differs from the upgrading programs provided in the communities? I am looking for information on the content and format of the programs and not the funding. Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Yakeleya. Mr. Dent.

Further Return To Question 591-15(3): University And College Entrance Program

HON. CHARLES DENT: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. In many ways there isn't a significant difference in the program. The biggest one is that adult basic education can be undertaken by anybody. The USEP is designed to provide travel expenses, living expenses, tuition and books for people who can achieve university level entrance within one year. That's probably the biggest difference, because adult basic education could require somebody taking ABE programs two or three years to get to university level entrance.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Dent. Supplementary, Mr. Yakeleya.

Supplementary To Question 591-15(3): University And College Entrance Program

MR. YAKELEYA: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Thank you, Minister. Mr. Speaker, will the Minister look into the possibilities of using GNWT's additional resources? He made a commitment earlier to look at that to increase the capacity of the UCEP to make it more accessible to the

NWT residents, especially through the student financial services in regard to the Metis people. Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Yakeleya. Mr. Dent.

Further Return To Question 591-15(3): University And College Entrance Program

HON. CHARLES DENT: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's always something we could take a look at. About seven years ago, Mr. Speaker -- maybe not that long, five or six years ago -- there was a forum that was empowered to review the Student Financial Assistance program and provide the Minister of the day with a number of recommendations. One of the specific directions they were given was to provide advice on to whom or what sorts of programs should be supported through student financial assistance. They held a number of public hearings and invited people from every community in the Northwest Territories to attend hearings and provide advice. The report they sent back to the Minister of the day was that student financial assistance should not be used for programs except those leading to diplomas, certificates or university or college degrees. So the program has since that time been governed by that approach. Certainly we could take a look at whether or not that's consistent with what Members and the public think is still appropriate. So we'll examine it, yes.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Dent. Final supplementary, Mr. Yakeleya.

Supplementary To Question 591-15(3): University And College Entrance Program

MR. YAKELEYA: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the response from the Minister. Can the Minister inform this House with an action plan as to how he plans to get the attention of the federal government to look at its policies of how it's administered or funded through our government in terms of assisting aboriginal peoples? However, on this program we do not include the Metis people. So what type of action plan is he going to look at and when can I expect something to see that things are getting done by this government? Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Yakeleya. Mr. Dent.

Further Return To Question 591-15(3): University And College Entrance Program

HON. CHARLES DENT: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I already committed in this House that by the time business plans are presented to the committees that I would update Members of the House on any actions I had taken to try and achieve this. As the Premier had noted earlier, there is an opportunity for all Members to lobby the federal Minister next week and I would certainly welcome the Members' intervention on this issue as I would hope to intervene as well. Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Dent. Item 7, oral questions. The honourable Member for Kam Lake, Mr. Ramsay.

Question 592-15(3): Lottery Revenues

MR. RAMSAY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, my questions are for the Minister of Municipal and Community Affairs, also the Minister responsible for lottery revenues in the territory. I know my colleague was talking about winning a billion dollars or if he had a billion dollars, but...The questions I had for the Minister I just wanted to understand a little bit about the lottery revenues here in the Northwest Territories. As I understand it, Sport North controls the lottery booths that are here in Yellowknife.

I've heard from many people in Yellowknife that access to these lottery booths, and it's a past-time for many northerners to play the lottery, to buy tickets, and they close the booth at 6:00. If you're in southern Canada you can go into many convenience stores and buy tickets around the clock. I'm wondering, is there a way that we can increase lottery revenues to the organizations that need it by increasing the length of time that these booths are open. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Ramsay. The Minister of Municipal and Community Affairs, Mr. McLeod.

Return To Question 592-15(3): Lottery Revenues

HON. MICHAEL MCLEOD: Mr. Speaker, I have to admit I'm not familiar enough with the new lottery regulations. In 2004 our Department of Municipal and Community Affairs along with Sport North and the Department of Justice, completed a review of the Lottery Act and regulations and the new regulations will govern how the program will be conducted. The Member is correct; right now the control of the sports lotteries are controlled by Sport North. The new sports council is being formulated. We have set up an implementation team. They are defining the nomination process and council selection that's taking place this month. We're hoping to have our first AGM for the sports council in April of this year. As part of their responsibilities we're hoping that they're going to lay out a resource management plan which will include a lot of this stuff following the lottery and support for the lottery and how they're going to increase their revenues. But I don't have the details on the actual regulations with me at this point, so I'd have to get back to the Member on that issue.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. McLeod. Supplementary, Mr. Ramsay.

Supplementary To Question 592-15(3): Lottery Revenues

MR. RAMSAY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'd be the first to agree that Sport North and the staff that they have do a first-rate job at running the lottery booths, especially the ones I'm known to frequent on occasion here in Yellowknife. The question I'd ask the Minister, and he doesn't have to provide an answer today, but I'm wondering if the organization, if it's a new council that's going to receive the lottery revenue, if they'll receive an increase in revenue if terminals are located in a variety of different locations or could we expect to get more revenue? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Ramsay. Mr. McLeod.

Further Return To Question 592-15(3): Lottery Revenues

HON. MICHAEL MCLEOD: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, one of the tasks that the new sports council will be having to undertake is to see how they can maximize revenue flow. At this point I'm not in a position to say whether that's going to involve more terminals or longer hours or where the terminals are going to be located. So I would have to seek that information and try to come back and provide that to the Member, Mr. Speaker. Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. McLeod. Supplementary, Mr. Ramsay.

Supplementary To Question 592-15(3): Lottery Revenues

MR. RAMSAY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. So after I think the Minister mentioned April 1st, is Sport North still going

to control the lottery booths or is it going to be the new sport and recreation council? Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Ramsay. Mr. McLeod.

Further Return To Question 592-15(3): Lottery Revenues

HON. MICHAEL MCLEOD: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The new sports council will spend this next coming year to organize a number of things including how they'll develop their resource management plan and how they'll develop and put out their communications and marketing plan and they also have to look at consolidating their offices, office space. We expect them to have, by this fall, a draft operating plan. We want to see business plans, we want to see a whole number of things for them to come forward. Our plan for them to start operating as an entity is for April 2006. Our first AGM for this council is April 2005 and they'll spend a whole year getting ready to be up and running by April 2006. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. McLeod. Final supplementary, Mr. Ramsay.

Supplementary To Question 592-15(3): Lottery Revenues

MR. RAMSAY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Then on April 1st, 2006, who's going to control the lottery revenue? Will it be Sport North or will it be the new sport and recreation council? Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Ramsay. Mr. McLeod.

Further Return To Question 592-15(3): Lottery Revenues

HON. MICHAEL MCLEOD: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. We're expecting the new sports council to have all the fiscal responsibilities by April 2006.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. McLeod. Item 7, oral questions. The honourable Member for Sahtu, Mr. Yakeleya.

Question 593-15(3): Chipseal Program In The Sahtu Region

MR. YAKELEYA: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I previously spoke about the concerns for the health of my constituents and the adverse effects that dust in our communities has on the elders and other people. Can the Minister of MACA confirm that the chipsealing program in the Sahtu will continue and that it's on track and on time? I'm concerned, Mr. Speaker, because I heard that MACA may discontinue this program after they have chipsealed Fort Good Hope. Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Yakeleya. The honourable Minister of Municipal and Community Affairs, Mr. McLeod.

Return To Question 593-15(3): Chipseal Program In The Sahtu Region

HON. MICHAEL MCLEOD: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I believe our chipseal program is on schedule and on time and we have no intention to, at this point, discontinue the program. It's a real need in all our small communities and some of our larger ones, also. But at this point, while we're doing the chipseal and following our schedules, we are also looking at alternative methods to deal with some of the dust problems. The chipseal program, although it serves its purpose, it's only geared towards chipsealing one stretch of road in a community which usually is the main street. We still have the dust problems in other areas

of the community. So we, as a department, have hired a consultant. We are looking at what are the options out there in terms of controlling the dust. We're expecting a report and we'd like to see if there are ways that we can do this more cost-effectively. If we can do that, then we will start looking at ways we can do more streets and more roads and then we'd consider moving away from the program. At this point we're not entertaining that unless something better comes along. Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. McLeod. Supplementary, Mr. Yakeleya.

Supplementary To Question 593-15(3): Chipseal Program In The Sahtu Region

MR. YAKELEYA: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm concerned that the roads in my communities are not chipsealed soon. I have a schedule here in front of me. The roadbeds may become damaged. Traffic and trucks are increasing in the small communities and the roads are taking more punishment than they're built for. Mr. Speaker, I'd like to ask the Minister of Municipal and Community Affairs if it doesn't make more sense to chipseal now or use that alternative solution on our roads than to avoid more expensive repairs later on in the year. Can the Minister of MACA please tell me if the department has considered this option? Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Yakeleya. Mr. McLeod.

Further Return To Question 593-15(3): Chipseal Program In The Sahtu Region

HON. MICHAEL MCLEOD: Mr. Speaker, I'm not sure what alternative option he's looking at. That is why we've hired a consultant to look at what is out there in terms of dust control. We know there's calcium, but some communities are quite concerned about how harmful it would be to the environment. There are other things such as what we're using on some of our airports. It's called EK-35. We've used it as dust suppressant on our airports. Most of the communities are quite happy with it. However, it's quite costly and we're not sure how corrosive it is, so we would need somebody to do an analysis of it and get back to us and also look at other options that we may have not seen or thought of at this point. That's what we're trying to accomplish with this study. Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. McLeod. Supplementary, Mr. Yakeleya.

Supplementary To Question 593-15(3): Chipseal Program In The Sahtu Region

MR. YAKELEYA: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to ask the Minister of MACA to tell me whether or not any of the new money like the municipal rural infrastructure fund or the gas tax money from the federal government can be used to speed up the process by which communities in the Sahtu are getting their roads chipsealed. Or if this money cannot be used directly for chipsealing, maybe it will free up some other money that can be used to advance the chipsealing schedule for the Sahtu. Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Yakeleya. Mr. McLeod.

Further Return To Question 593-15(3): Chipseal Program In The Sahtu Region

HON. MICHAEL MCLEOD: Mr. Speaker, the monies that come for some of the programs that are being unveiled by the federal government, such as the MRIF and the gas tax, come with certain conditions and criteria. Although we're quite familiar and quite certain with what the

conditions and criteria the MRIF money will be tied to, the gas tax is not something we have an agreement on and we have only started negotiations last week. We can safely say that some of the money can be spent in the area of roads and bridges, however, most of the dollars will be earmarked towards sustainable infrastructure. I don't have a definition of what that could mean and could include at this point.

It's difficult to answer the questions regarding whether this can be spent on chipseal. My guess would be that it couldn't be, but it probably could help us in stabilizing the base of the road or providing some of the upkeep and doing some of the drainage work that is needed. That has yet to be determined. We should have some answers, as I indicated to some of the other Members, by the end of March or early April. We should also have our study in place that gives us some options of how we can deal with dust in the communities. We have done a number of roads in communities and in some cases it really has not made a whole lot of difference when we pave one street and all the other streets are still not being treated with any type of dust suppressant. I should point out to the Member though, in our community government funding we do provide some monies to the communities to put calcium or some type of dust control on the roads. That money is already there. The chipsealing program is over and above that and it was planned to be a top-up and most communities are now looking at it as the only method of doing some dust control. That shouldn't be the case. There are still dollars in their funding to buy their own calcium or do their own dust control treatment. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. McLeod. The time for oral questions has expired; however, I'll allow the Member his final short supplementary.

Supplementary To Question 593-15(3): Chipseal Program In The Sahtu Region

MR. YAKELEYA: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, the winter road does come into the community of Tulita and I would like to ask the Minister of Transportation if he's considering paving the ice winter road. Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Yakeleya. Mr. McLeod.

Further Return To Question 593-15(3): Chipseal Program In The Sahtu Region

HON. MICHAEL MCLEOD: Mr. Speaker, the Member would have to demonstrate to me that it's something that would be sustainable. So I would have to see those types of studies first.

---Laughter

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. McLeod. The time for oral questions has expired. Item 8, written questions. Item 9, returns to written questions. Item 10, petitions. The honourable Member for Tu Nedhe, Mr. Villeneuve.

ITEM 10: PETITIONS

Petition 5-15(3): Removal Of Fort Resolution Social Workers

MR. VILLENEUVE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to table a petition from the community of Deninu Kue with respect to the operation of the health services in Deninu Kue. Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Villeneuve. Petitions. Item 11, reports of committees on the review of bills. Item

12, tabling of documents. The honourable Minister of Education, Culture and Employment, Mr. Dent.

ITEM 12: TABLING OF DOCUMENTS

Tabled Document 124-15(3): GNWT Response To Committee Report 7-15(3), Report On The Review Of The Information And Privacy Commissioner's Annual Report, 2002-2003

HON. CHARLES DENT: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I wish to table the following document entitled The Government of the Northwest Territories Response to Committee Report 7-15(3), Report on the Review of the Information and Privacy Commissioner's Annual Report, 2002-2003. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Dent. Item 12, tabling of documents. The honourable Minister of Finance, Mr. Roland.

Tabled Document 125-15(3): List Of Interactivity Transfers Exceeding \$250,000 For The Period April 1, 2004, To February 8, 2005

HON. FLOYD ROLAND: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. As required by section 32.1(2) of the Financial Administration Act, I wish to table the following document entitled List of Interactivity Transfers Exceeding \$250,000 for the Period April 1st, 2004, to February 8th, 2005." Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Roland. Item 12, tabling of documents. The honourable Minister of Resources, Wildlife and Economic Development, Mr. Bell.

Tabled Document 126-15(3): Natural Resources Conservation Trust Fund 2003-2004 Annual Report

HON. BRENDAN BELL: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I wish to table the following document entitled Natural Resources Conservation Trust Fund 2003-2004 Annual Report. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Bell. Item 12, tabling of documents.

Tabled Document 127-15(3): Statutory Declaration Of Residence Dated March 7, 2005, Of Mr. Robert McLeod, Member For Inuvik Twin Lakes

Pursuant to section 19(b) of the indemnities, allowances and expenses regulations of the Legislative Assembly and Executive Council Act, I hereby table the statutory declaration of residence dated March 7, 2005, of Mr. Robert McLeod, Member for Inuvik Twin Lakes.

Item 12, tabling of documents. Item 13, notices of motion. The honourable Member for Tu Nedhe, Mr. Villeneuve.

ITEM 13: NOTICES OF MOTION

Motion 34-15(3): Appointments To Standing Committees And The Board Of Management

MR. VILLENEUVE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I give notice that on Monday, March 14, 2005, I will move the following motion: Now therefore I move, seconded by the honourable Member for Range Lake, that the following appointments be rescinded:

- a) Mr. Robert Hawkins, Member for Yellowknife Centre, to the Standing Committee on Social Programs;
- b) Mr. Robert Villeneuve, Member for Tu Nedhe, to the Board of Management as an alternate; and,
- c) Mr. Norman Yakeleya, Member for Sahtu, to the Standing Committee on Governance and Economic Development as an alternate.

And further that the following appointments be affected:

- a) Mr. Robert Hawkins, Member for Yellowknife Centre, to the Standing Committee on Governance and Economic Development;
- b) Mr. Robert McLeod, Member for Inuvik Twin Lakes, to the Standing Committee on Accountability and Oversight, to the Standing Committee on Social Programs, and to the Standing Committee on Governance and Economic Development as an alternate; and,
- c) Mr. Norman Yakeleya, Member for Sahtu to the Board of Management as an alternate.

Mr. Speaker, at the appropriate time today I will seek unanimous consent to deal with this motion today and to waive Rule 58 to allow this motion to proceed. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Villeneuve. Item 13, notices of motion. The Member for Tu Nedhe, Mr. Villeneuve.

Motion 35-15(3): Objection To Mackenzie Valley Land And Water Board Appointment

MR. VILLENEUVE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I give notice that on Monday, March 14, 2005, I will move the following motion: Now therefore I move, seconded by the honourable Member for North Slave, that the Premier immediately communicate to the Minister of Indian Affairs and Northern Development the GNWT's and this Legislative Assembly's objection to the appointment of a non-resident of the NWT, who is not nominated by the board members, as a chair of the Mackenzie Valley Land and Water Board.

Mr. Speaker, at the appropriate time I will seek unanimous consent to deal with this motion today.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Villeneuve. Item 13, notices of motion. Item 14, notices of motion for first reading of bills. Item 15, motions. The honourable Member for Great Slave, Mr. Braden.

ITEM 15: MOTIONS

Motion 31-15(3): Performance Audit Of The Workers' Compensation Board

MR. BRADEN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

WHEREAS the Ministers responsible for the Workers' Compensation Board of the Northwest Territories and Nunavut appointed a Workers' Compensation Board Legislative Review Panel in 2001 to consult with stakeholders and make recommendations to the Ministers for changes to the acts;

AND WHEREAS the panel, upon completion of its work, prepared a report in December 2001 entitled "Act Now" which expressed concern that the workers' compensation system has become adversarial and recommended, based on input from both workers and employers, that an independent review of WCB operations be conducted immediately;

AND WHEREAS no independent public operational review has been undertaken or initiated regarding the board nor has the Minister, in responding to questions posed in the Legislative Assembly, indicated any intentions of undertaking such a review;

AND WHEREAS trends in statistics indicate an increasing number of rejected claims by the WCB;

AND WHEREAS elected Members of this and prior assemblies have been made aware of serious concerns regarding the workers' compensation system of the board, including:

- excessive delays, some of which have exceed 10 years, in the review and resolution of claims by injured workers;
- the makeup, procedures, expertise and performance of the board's Appeals Tribunal;
- Appeals Tribunal decisions that are not quickly and efficiently implemented;
- the perceived corporate culture of denial of claims and protection of the workers' compensation claims fund at the expense of injured workers;
- the absence of financial and operational accountability of the workers' compensation organization both to the Legislative Assembly and the public-at-large; and,
- the degree to which appropriate human and operational resources are dedicated to the workers' compensation mandate of the NWT Workers' Compensation Board.

NOW THEREFORE I MOVE, seconded by the honourable Member for Nunakput, that the Legislative Assembly request that the Auditor General of Canada undertake a comprehensive performance audit of the workers' compensation function of the Northwest Territories/Nunavut Workers' Compensation Board and report thereon to the Legislative Assembly;

AND FURTHER that the performance audit examine the organization, training and orientation of personnel, practices, attitudes, philosophy, internal performance measures, procedures and resources association with administering claims made by injured workers to ascertain whether these confirm with, and claims are managed in accordance with, the spirit and intent of the act;

AND FURTHERMORE that the audit examine the adequacy and appropriateness of the board's corporate governance model and accountability relationship to the Government of the Northwest Territories and the Legislative Assembly;

AND FURTHERMORE that the Auditor General examine such additional factors as she, in her opinion, feels are relevant;

AND FURTHERMORE that all employees, officials, board and tribunal members actively cooperative with the Auditor General in providing all appropriate documents, records, papers and information;

AND FURTHERMORE that the Auditor General is requested to complete this special performance audit as soon as practicable and provide a report to the Legislative Assembly.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Braden. Motion is on the floor. The motion is in order. To the motion. The honourable Member for Great Slave, Mr. Braden.

MR. BRADEN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The initiative that I have proposed, and my colleague from Nunakput is seconding, is not a small or a lightly undertaken initiative. The function of the WCB is one that is essential to the success and the stability of our workers and our workforce in virtually every endeavour here in the NWT, in our

communities, in our governments, in our small businesses and big businesses too. Mr. Speaker, over my time here as a Member of this Legislative Assembly, I have had frequent traffic with a number of workers who have come to me with what really is a common story of in some cases denial, in some cases interference, in some cases of avoidance of their situation when it comes to managing our obligation and our promise to them through the WCB and promises made by employers to handle their case in a compassionate and a fair way.

Mr. Speaker, a very common assumption that comes up through these situations and the correspondence that I've seen over the last five years through Ministers' offices from the WCB is that when difficult cases come along or those that may have aspects of interpretation or implementation that aren't quite cut and dried or aren't all that straightforward, that there's been a very marked and demonstrated tendency, I believe, for the people in positions of authority and responsibility that if there's going to be an error, it's made in favour of the Workers' Compensation Board and especially of the fund.

Mr. Speaker, it is I think one of the great agreements of our modern world, our modern workforce, that the idea of a no-fault insurance process was created called the Workers' Compensation Board here. There are many like it, certainly all over North America. But for it to have the confidence of both the employers, who are major stakeholders, and, of course, employees, it has to be implemented. It has to be seen to be working with a mandate and indeed this is expressed over and over and over again, Mr. Speaker, where there's benefit of the doubt it goes to the worker. In my experience, our WCB does not give this benefit of doubt.

In asking the Auditor General to come into this and make this enquiry on our behalf, I recognize that the Auditor General does perform a regular auditing function for all of our government departments and our Crown agencies, but there is something that we cannot rely on, Mr. Speaker, on a regular basis. That is a performance review of just are they doing what they are expected to do in the spirit and the intent by which the legislation was created. This is such an investigation.

I'm very, very pleased with the support that I've gotten from my colleagues, Mr. Speaker, in bringing this forward. I'm looking forward to a very clear report from the WCB that will help us to set a new course, perhaps in legislation or in regulation, on how we can better manage situations on behalf of injured workers. I know from talking to the people, Mr. Speaker, the damage that it does not only to their lives; their working careers sometimes are ended very badly and eroded because of an injury. The impact that this has on the families of these injured workers, Mr. Speaker, as they strive to try to get some degree of stability or normalcy back into their lives after a serious injury. The events they find themselves in of never ending loops, Mr. Speaker, of appeals, of having to explain their situations to different case workers. A lot of these systemic kinds of things, Mr. Speaker, that I know we can do a better job of and that is why I'm very pleased to be presenting this motion and looking forward to its acceptance and the report of the Auditor General in due course. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

---Applause

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Braden. To the motion. The honourable Member for Kam Lake, Mr. Ramsay.

MR. RAMSAY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to say that I'm going to support the motion that's before us today. I appreciate the work that the Member for Great Slave, Mr. Braden, has put into this piece of work. It's a huge undertaking that this motion sets in motion. I know Mr. Braden has been a Member of this Legislative Assembly for quite a bit longer than I have and he's had an opportunity to work with injured workers more than I have; but in my year-and-a-bit that I have been a Member of the Legislative Assembly, I have dealt with a couple of constituents that were injured workers. It's not a normal practice when you are dealing with an injured worker. A normal constituent comes in and you can talk to one of the Cabinet Ministers and try to identify areas where you might be able to actually lend them a hand or help them along their path. With WCB claimants it's almost impossible as a Regular Member to help these individuals out. I know on the two occasions that I've had to try, you make some phone calls, you talk to the worker's advisor and that's about it. The Minister doesn't want to talk to you and nobody really wants to talk to you. Somewhere the injured worker is still left to suffer along and try to find a resolution to the difficulties that they are encountering.

One of the other things I wanted to mention is that as a former business owner, employers are always concerned about the cost of doing business, especially here in the Northwest Territories where everything else is very expensive. In some cases, I think employers have been hit with substantial increases to their rates over the past two or three years specifically. In some cases, probably 50 or 60 percent increases and for smaller businesses, Mr. Speaker, that causes them, obviously, some pain. This is going to certainly be felt by the Workers' Compensation Board. It's a big undertaking to have the Auditor General come in, but I look at it as being a healthy exercise. Maybe we can learn from it. I see it being a positive exercise, Mr. Speaker, and I'm glad that Mr. Braden has put the work into this and I'm happy to support that today. I think it is a worthwhile exercise and I'd hate to think that there are injured workers out there that we're not helping and we have to do what we can to help them. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Ramsay. To the motion. The honourable Member for Range Lake, Ms. Lee.

MS. LEE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I am also happy to be supporting this motion and to have the opportunity to discuss this very important area today. Mr. Speaker, I'd also like to thank the Member for Great Slave who has worked very hard, and the staff who have helped him put this together. I have had many occasions to speak to him about our mutual concerns about some of the WCB files, as we would like to call them, that we have been working on for many, many years.

Mr. Speaker, I support this motion, knowing that this is a motion that is very comprehensive. It is giving a very wide responsibility and power to the Auditor General's office. We are asking her office to do quite a thorough review about various aspects of the operations of the WCB and, as Mr. Braden stated, this was a part of the work that was planned to be done during the last Assembly that we did not pursue that there. This is an opportunity for us to revisit that.

The reason why I support this is because I do respect the fact that the Workers' Compensation Board is an independent body, but it is a public body and all public bodies that use public money and where the body asks the public such as the employers to pay assessments and

make decisions about how that money is spent, I believe that body has to be accountable to somebody. I respect that if the elected leaders are not the ones that can do it in a direct way, if we cannot ask the board directly about the decisions that they are making, I think that a body like the federal Auditor General's office should be the one that should be able to ask the questions that people want to know. I think this is an opportunity for that to happen.

I'll be very interested in seeing what the results might be. I'm hoping that the results of this review will teach us and guide us as to where we go from here. Certainly, Mr. Speaker, I can tell you that in the last Assembly I had many WCB files and at the beginning I was an enthusiastic champion for all those people that look to the MLAs to help them. I can tell you, Mr. Speaker, I've had grown men cry in my office about what they are going through and I've had grown women, women of ages twice as old as me, telling me about what they are going through. I'm old enough to know and I know enough to know that I've listened to these cases very carefully, I make judgments on that and I have fought for many of them. I have convened a meeting of the injured worker, the family, the doctors, the nurses, the WCB doctors, WCB president, and I would have a case meeting on that and I feel that this is great, I'm making something happen, we get an agreement and benefits get reinstated, and a month later it's gone. The poor worker has to go through the whole process all over again.

Mr. Speaker, I'm happy to do this, but we can't be doing this full time for all of the injured workers that cannot speak for themselves. I think that if an assessment is done, we should have an understanding and a reasonable expectation that the benefits they are receiving will last more than the time it takes for you to turn around. Mr. Speaker, I do appreciate that most cases that go to WCB get approved. Almost 90 percent of the cases get approved. It is about 10 percent of cases that do not get approved that seem to have to go through a chronic situation where no one else can help, and I'm telling you I'm not an expert, but these are very, very compelling cases.

Let me tell you about some of the cases we are talking about. I can tell you there are three men on my street, on one street of my riding, the first case is a man who is about 39 years old. He has worked all his adult working life in a mine. He is younger than me; I know him and I went to school with him. He has worked all his working life in a mine. He cannot work anymore. His knees don't work anymore and a lot of it has to do with that heavy duty work that he did, and his employer covered for these benefits and he paid into the funds. After years of going through WCB, he has told me that he can only be covered for one percent of his disabilities. He is 39 years old and he is not asking to be compensated or get a paycheque from WCB for the rest of his life. He is only asking to be retrained, so that he can get into a new line of work where he is not hindered by his disability, so he can provide for his family. He has lost his case and he has to hire a lawyer to go through the appeal.

Let me tell you about another guy who lives just 15 houses down the road. This guy is about 35 years old and this guy has worked all his working life too and has injured his back and cannot work anymore. He is asking for retraining, but because of his condition... You are okay if you break an arm or leg or something is very obvious, but if it is a chronic pain situation, you are not going to be compensated. This guy, at 35, is not asking for

compensation for the rest of his life, he is just asking to be retrained.

I have another guy who lives on the other side of the street; same thing. He has been an electrician all his life; he has all sorts of injuries. He has lost his cases, he also has to retain a lawyer to do this.

Mr. Speaker, all these people feel that WCB is just not there for them. They might win some cases, they appeal them, they win some for a little bit and then they are put right back into the list of having to explain their situations all over again. They feel that eventually they are just to wear out of this process and many of them move down south because they cannot afford to live here if they cannot make a living.

I tell you that there are many people and many injured workers who have chosen to move because, for some reason lately, somebody got the understanding that we are going to be dealing with this motion. I have been getting calls from south of 60. I got a call from somebody in Manitoba who said I hear you are doing this motion and let me tell you my story. This guy is exactly the same case. He is 43 years old and injured and can't get training, Mr. Speaker.

I can tell you that Chronic Pain Syndrome, chronic pain cases, are a big problem. In spite of the fact that the Supreme Court just ruled that chronic pain should be covered and I believe that WCB has made some adjustments, but still are not willing to go all the way. I think that they should be, to equalize their treatment.

Mr. Speaker, I just want to speak to the other side of this issue, which has to do with the employer's aspect. When I was fighting for employees, I was always made to understand that WCB had a boss, well they had the board to listen to, but their client that they had to answer to were the employers who paid the assessment rates. I can tell you, yesterday I got calls from at least four or five ratepayers of WCB who just got hit with another 26 percent increase in their assessment, and that is on top of another 20 something percent increase last year. In over two years their assessment rate has gone up 54 percent.

I was always told by previous WCB administration, but look, we have to manage our money well, we have to answer to the assessors and we have to answer to them about how we do our job. Well, talking to these people who are paying the assessment, they are telling that they have no say really on how all this is being done. Last year they appealed the assessment; nothing changed. They were hoping that everything would at least stay the same and not go up; this year they are hit with another 27 percent.

We allow WCB to be a monopoly. There is no other WCB you can go to if your service is not good. That is why this has to be regulated. This is why we, as a public body, have to make sure that there is some accountability there. The employees are asking what are we doing with our money. Who is causing all these increases? How can we have a say on how this money is spent?

I can tell you that a preliminary study that I have done at my office shows that overall, at least between 1994 and 2002, the number of claims have gone down, the number of rejected claims have gone up a little and their investments in some parts were not doing that well, but we don't know what happened because nobody really gets to see that, their administration has gone up all along.

These are the questions that I cannot ask. We have tried -- and Mr. Braden will be the first one to agree with me -- in the last Assembly we have had WCB people come up and answer questions, but I am convinced that having seen what I have, that this will be a fruitful and productive exercise for us to ask the Auditor General's office to look at how we are managing our WCB operations.

For all I know, everything might be fine; that's great, but maybe we could get some guidance and directions as to how they are doing and what we can do better as legislators and what we can do better to meet the needs of workers who are feeling left behind, and also address the employers who are wondering where their assessments are going and how and what determines what their rights are.

Mr. Speaker, I have been able to lay out some of the concerns that I have seen over the years and for all the reasons that I have stated. Hence, I will be supporting this motion and I would like to again thank the Member of Great Slave for doing this and I would urge the rest of the House to support this motion. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

---Applause

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Ms. Lee. To the motion. The honourable Member for Tu Nedhe, Mr. Villeneuve.

MR. VILLENEUVE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise briefly to speak on this motion and I would like to thank the Member for raising this issue and commend his diligence on initiating a review of the WCB department and management regime.

Mr. Speaker, I am supportive of this motion due to the fact that I have received numerous enquiries and concerns about the WCB over the past year just with respect to the unfair treatment of some of the WCB clients and the total lack of proper accountability and mechanisms in the department.

I could mention many cases and circumstances that people are dealing with, as my friend from Range Lake has mentioned, but I think that we all get the picture of where she is coming from and what other Members that support the motion are alluding to.

I just want to talk about the attitude of the management regime of the WCB. To me it seems to be one of apathy and disregard for accountability and transparency. These values, Mr. Speaker, are what this government has entrenched in its vision of a shared responsibility and I think that should be carried right across the board in every government department, arm's length departments and everybody else.

I look forward to a comprehensive review of the WCB's activities, just to ensure that our northern workers can expect and will expect to receive fair and respectful treatment that they so duly deserve. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Villeneuve. To the motion. The honourable Member for Nahendeh, Mr. Menicoche.

MR. MENICOCHÉ: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise, too, in support of this motion. Just a few thoughts with respect to WCB claimants in my riding where there are lots of small communities, Mr. Speaker, and in fact I have six. The inquiries that I did get are that in our smaller communities like Nahanni Butte and Trout Lake, there is a quiet acquiescence to when they are dealing with WCB.

They are sitting in their small communities and getting notices in the mail that they are cut off and they can't really do too much. I pride some of the examples that my colleagues have brought out. In the larger centres they are able to go see their MLAs, go see doctors for second opinions, have meetings, but in the smaller communities they just cannot do that, Mr. Speaker.

I, too, believe that WCB should benefit all, despite our locations. That is something that really has to be looked at and here is an opportunity to do that. That is why I am for this motion. Just looking at some of the documentation that is already before me, we have the total number of claims climbing over the past three or four years, but the total of accepted claims remains the same. It almost seems that there is a hidden policy to keep the amount of claims the same every year, no matter what happens to the workers. There are fathers and mothers and children that come from our injured workers. We have an unwritten contract to take care of them through the WCB.

Just looking at their revenue statements, I have noticed, as well, the rates for the small businesses and businesses are increasing. If you look at the revenue statements, you have investment revenue taking a sharp decline because they have poor managers for their investment monies, they have to take it off the backs of the businesses as well. What is really going on here?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Shame! Shame!

MR. MENICOCHÉ: I am really happy that we can have a really good look at this and have the Auditor General have a really good look at how we are running our Workers' Compensation Board, Mr. Speaker.

Above all, this just goes back to that one person; in this case a person from Trout Lake. He cannot earn income and he is cut off and yet, despite his pleas, he has to somehow make income and he has nowhere to turn and he can't make any income, Mr. Speaker.

I am very supportive of this motion and I would like to see a total in-depth review and that is what this motion calls for, and I am very much in support of it. Mahsi cho.

---Applause

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Menicoche. To the motion. The honourable Member for Yellowknife Centre, Mr. Hawkins.

MR. HAWKINS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I don't really have a lot to say because all of my colleagues have said quite a bit already. Keeping that in mind, I have not had a lot of personal calls from injured workers. I wish to assure everyone that my phone is on the hook.

I will emphasize, Mr. Speaker, I have had phone calls from the employer's side. The employer's side is they are very concerned with the way the rates are and how they keep climbing up. One year it is 26 percent, the next year it's even more, and who knows where it is going to be the next year.

Mr. Speaker, I am in support of this and I will say that, being in significant favour of an audit. I believe the process is what it is and give it a chance and WCB should not be afraid of an audit and I think no department should be afraid of an audit and we should go forward and allow this motion to proceed to do a healthy check. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Hawkins. To the motion. The honourable Member for North Slave, Mr. Zoe.

MR. ZOE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I, too, will be in support of this motion. I did experience calls from my constituents pertaining to WCB. It is very difficult, Mr. Speaker, just to try to get information, especially for MLAs to try to get information on a specific client. I had an opportunity -- I even tried to go through the Minister's office, Mr. Speaker -- to try to get details as to where this client was or how he was being treated.

I just needed general information. I listen to both sides, this is the WCB's rationale and the client and what he has to say, and then I determine how I should deal with this as an issue. I even had to get written permission from the client just to get information, documents from WCB, and it took ages. Little things like that shouldn't be happening.

I am glad the Member for Great Slave has put this motion forward, so that the Auditor General, through an operational audit, can come up with recommendations on how to streamline all these little things that clients are encountering. Again, also with employers; they are paying enormous rates, as the Member for Range Lake has indicated. I am looking forward to the Auditor General's report on this issue. Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Zoe. To the motion. The honourable Member for Sahtu, Mr. Yakeleya.

MR. YAKELEYA: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I also will be supporting this motion and think that, Mr. Speaker, this is very healthy for this government to re-evaluate the WCB in terms of the issues that the Auditor General may find, especially for the small communities that are primarily Slavey speaking -- the aboriginal language is the first language in terms of them getting some services -- and see what they can do in terms of strengthening the governance of WCB or the way it manages claims and how it is perceived in the public.

WCB doesn't have to be seen as a place to fear, but somewhere that they will take care of you. That is what we are here for in this government.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear! Hear!

MR. YAKELEYA: That is our vision; that is our leadership. I believe that the Minister was showing some good leadership in that area, in terms of re-looking at the WCB with the Auditor General, with us, with our people. These people work because they love to work and when they get hurt, surely, Mr. Speaker, they need to be taken care of by us as a government. That is our job, so I think this motion is timely and I fully support this motion. Thank you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Timely.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Yakeleya. To the motion. The honourable Member for Hay River South, Mrs. Groenewegen.

MRS. GROENEWEGEN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I will be speaking in favour of the motion as well. I think that if there was a time when we need to be compassionate and particularly attentive to our constituents, it is at the time when they are in need and they have been injured. This can be very trying on many fronts, on people's personal lives, on their financial well-being, on their livelihood and on the well-being of their families, as well.

I think that we need a culture within our WCB which is very sensitive to injured workers. I, as well, have received concerns over the years from constituents who felt that they had had the WCB and the employers turn their backs on them after they were injured.

Also, Mr. Speaker, during a lot of the media coverage of the Giant Mine trial, we heard some of the cost estimates on some of the services that were retained by the WCB and I have a lot of questions around that, and I think that an audit of this nature also would deal with some of the operations decisions that were made in respect to that. I just think it is good business from time to time to take a look at the operations of an organization like this, to ensure that it does reflect what our priorities are and what our thoughts are as a government who oversees this as well as the employers and employees. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mrs. Groenewegen. To the motion. The honourable Minister responsible for the Workers' Compensation Board, Mr. Krutko.

HON. DAVID KRUTKO: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I will be speaking to the motion in regard to issues that have been raised in the motion. I think it is important to realize that the direction that was given to the corporation came by way of the Act Now document, in which a lot of those have been implemented. They did a special audit of the operation of the Workers' Compensation Board, which was done by the Auditor General in 2002.

Also, they have done a reorganization of the Workers' Compensation Board to allow for the recommendations that came out of the Act Now. The Act Now came by way of two phases. The first phase was to look at the operation side. The second phase was to look at the legal parameters between the boards -- the appeals board, the governance council -- and also look at the rates that the corporation sets, which is now being developed under phase two.

That work is ongoing and will be coming to this House, hopefully we are looking at this fall, but because of this motion, it could delay that factor. I think it is important to realize that the Workers' Compensation Board does have to follow certain legislative responsibilities that we give it, from the Legislature, in regard to the Workers' Compensation Act and also through the Financial Administration Act. They have to follow our Financial Administration Act of this Legislature and also because of the Mine Health and Safety Act that is in place.

They are governed by these acts, which are passed by this Legislature. It is important to keep that in mind, in regard to this motion. One of the most critical concerns that I have with this motion is because of our relationship we have with our Nunavut colleagues and also because this board is a joint board which is shared by both territories.

I have been in correspondence with my colleagues in Nunavut and they are upset that this motion is coming forward in this manner, without them being consulted on such a motion, because we do have a joint arrangement. We do have a memorandum of understanding with Nunavut and ourselves in relation to this board that they will be consulted on these types of movements.

Again, I think it is crucial that we realize that this definitely does not sit well with my colleague from Nunavut because of the way this motion came about without having them consulted or made aware that such a motion was going to be there. I think it is important to realize that we do have obligations through a memorandum of understanding. We have signed with Nunavut and ourselves in the arrangement of how we manage this joint board and at those legislatures.

Like I stated in the House, I have had an opportunity to meet with my colleague in Nunavut on this matter. Again, they are upset because a lot of the legislation that came forth in regard to the board, the first in regard to phase one, we passed it in this Legislature and, basically, all they got to do in Nunavut was rubberstamp it. They were upset about that because they wanted to make some changes in regard to that legislation. Again, this is another situation where we have to realize that we have to work in conjunction with our colleagues in Nunavut, because we do share this board together and also we do have to consult each other on where we are going with this. I think it is important to note that.

Again, I think that the Member realizes that we are going through a process such as the implementation of the Act Now document. We have gone through phase one. Phase two will be coming to this House looking at the activities they have to do. There were some 100 resolutions passed. In order to do that, it took several years.

I think it is important to realize that the corporation is audited by the Auditor General every year and a report is tabled in this House to how their operation is audited. Also, you have to realize that there is definitely a distinction between the governance council and the Appeals Tribunal. Those are two separate bodies which were implemented through Act Now through phase one. If you are going to do an operational review, you have to ensure that you encompass each of those. Also, we do have operations that we have established through Nunavut because of implementation of phase one.

I just wanted to raise that. I think it is important that Members keep that in mind, that we do have a joint responsibility here. I have been notified by my colleague from Nunavut who is upset because of the way this motion came forward without their consultation. Thank you.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Pokiak): Thank you, Mr. Krutko. The motion is in order. To the motion.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Question.

MR. SPEAKER: I will allow the mover of the motion some closing comments on this debate. Mr. Braden.

MR. BRADEN: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I do want to express my appreciation and support and the justification that my colleagues have given for backing this on behalf of injured workers in their constituencies who they know of. Mr. Hawkins indicated that our phones are indeed ready to be answered. I must admit I am feeling a little shy, Mr. Speaker, because I don't have boxes and boxes of files that I will be able to put at the disposal of the Auditor General, because so many of those workers over the years have had to leave the NWT and are living in other parts of Canada because they simply cannot afford to live here and carry on with the diminished capacity to work and the very small returns that they claim they are getting as a result of WCB's handling.

Mr. Speaker, I am going to address a couple of things that the Minister has said. But first of all, I have to say that it is this kind of objection, push back, resistance and denial that we have been receiving through the years and the letters that are demonstrated on the floor of the Assembly again today by the attitude of the Minister. It is very much why I wanted to bring this motion forward because, through the conventional process, the political process, we are just getting nowhere on behalf of injured workers. The Auditor General is an agency that has the credibility and the experience and the authority to go in there and

hopefully find out where we are, as the whereases and the wherefores in this fairly extensive motion point out. It is extensive, Mr. Speaker, because it is, in essence, a job description. These are the things that we have heard. These are the things that we want the Auditor General to look into, confirm and sort out for us so that we can get on with it.

Mr. Speaker, the Minister mentioned that the Minister from Nunavut may be upset with this inquiry. That may be so. But I have made some of my own inquiries about Nunavut, and I am finding that their injured workers and Regular Members have issues exactly the same as we do. We do not need to ask the permission of Nunavut to engage in this kind of investigation on behalf of our own workers.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear! Hear!

---Applause

MR. BRADEN: I am very confident, Mr. Speaker, that what we will find out through the investigation here will only benefit workers from Nunavut.

The Minister does make a very valid point in that we do have a hard-won agreement with our sister territory, Nunavut, to share the resources and the responsibilities of running this WCB that we can share. I think that is a good arrangement. He also made the point that when we proceed on legislation, we have to be careful to proceed in tandem so that both territories can accommodate the legislative process and the changes that we see as required. But, Mr. Speaker, this is an operational review. This is a performance review. I want to find out whether the spirit or the intent of the legislation and the delivery of services to injured workers is really what we should expect and what they deserve. Those are the answers there. I can't get it through the regular process. Again, that is why the Auditor General is coming in.

The Minister mentioned a report that was commissioned in 2002. This would be after the Act Now report, done by the Auditor General. It has never seen the light of day on my desk or on this side of the Legislative Assembly. So while it may be in existence, that is fine. But what good is it to us if it is going to be kept under wraps, never disclosed and only internalized? That is, again, why I want the Auditor General to do a public review where the injured workers, employers, every stakeholder comes in and has their say, has their story told, examined and reported back.

A couple of other Members, Mr. Speaker, raised some interests to the aspect of the specific interest of employers in this. Another Member raised the interest of our WCB's actions in relation to the Giant Mine trial. The motion was scripted, Mr. Speaker, in such a way that there is the scope and the latitude to allow the Auditor General, if she chooses, to go into these other areas of relevance.

So, with that, Mr. Speaker, I think we have had a very good discussion on it today. I hope we have carried through the significance and the importance that we believe this issue has on behalf of our workers today and very much in the future. We have some massive construction projects on the horizon of the Northwest Territories. This is one part of our infrastructure that we better have in shape. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

---Applause

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Braden.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Question.

MR. SPEAKER: Question has been called. All those in favour? All those opposed? The motion is carried.

---Carried

---Applause

Item 15, motions. The honourable Member for Tu Nedhe, Mr. Villeneuve.

MR. VILLENEUVE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I seek unanimous consent to deal with the motion I gave notice of earlier today regarding appointments to committees.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Villeneuve. The Member is seeking unanimous consent to deal with the motion that he gave notice of earlier today. Are there any nays? There are no nays. Mr. Villeneuve, you may deal with the motion.

MR. VILLENEUVE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I also request unanimous consent to waive Rule 58 to allow Motion 34-15(3) to proceed.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Villeneuve. The Member is seeking unanimous consent to waive Rule 58 and allow Motion 34-15(3) to proceed. Are there any nays? There are no nays. You may proceed with the motion, Mr. Villeneuve.

Motion 34-15(3): Appointments To Standing Committees And The Board Of Management

MR. VILLENEUVE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Thank you, colleagues. Appointments to standing committees and board of management.

WHEREAS Robert McLeod has been elected as Member for Inuvik Twin Lakes;

AND WHEREAS a number of changes to standing committee and Board of Management appointments have been recommended by the Striking Committee;

NOW THEREFORE I MOVE, seconded by the honourable Member for Range Lake, that the following appointments be rescinded:

- a) Mr. Robert Hawkins, Member for Yellowknife Centre, to the Standing Committee on Social Programs;
- b) Mr. Robert Villeneuve, Member for Tu Nedhe, to the Board of Management as an alternate; and,
- c) Mr. Norman Yakeleya, Member for Sahtu, to the Standing Committee on Governance and Economic Development as an alternate.

AND FURTHER that the following appointments be effected:

- a) Mr. Robert Hawkins, Member for Yellowknife Centre, to the Standing Committee on Governance and Economic Development;
- b) Mr. Robert McLeod, Member for Inuvik Twin Lakes, to the Standing Committee on Accountability and Oversight, to the Standing Committee on Social Programs, and to the Standing Committee on Governance and Economic Development as an alternate; and,
- c) Mr. Norman Yakeleya, Member for Sahtu, to the Board of Management as an alternate.

Mahsi, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Villeneuve. The motion is in order. To the motion.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Question.

MR. SPEAKER: Question has been called. All those in favour? All those opposed? The motion is carried.

---Carried

---Applause

Item 15, motions. The honourable Member for Tu Nedhe, Mr. Villeneuve.

MR. VILLENEUVE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I seek unanimous consent to deal with the motion I gave notice of earlier today. Mahsi.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Villeneuve. The Member is seeking unanimous consent to deal with the motion that he gave notice of earlier today. Are there any nays? There are no nays. Mr. Villeneuve, you may proceed with the motion.

Motion 35-15(3): Objection To Mackenzie Valley Land And Water Board Appointment

MR. VILLENEUVE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Thank you, colleagues.

WHEREAS the Mackenzie Valley Resource Management Act states the purpose of the establishment of boards by the act is to enable residents of the Mackenzie Valley to participate in the management of its resources for the benefit of the residents and of other Canadians;

AND WHEREAS the act provides that the chairperson of a board shall be appointed by the federal Minister from persons nominated by a majority of the board members;

AND WHEREAS the chair's position for the Mackenzie Valley Land and Water Board is currently vacant and the board has nominated three Northwest Territories residents for the federal Minister's consideration;

AND WHEREAS the CBC reported on March 7, 2005, that a resident of British Columbia, who is not nominated by board members, has been added to the short list of candidates for the chair;

NOW THEREFORE I MOVE, seconded by the honourable Member for North Slave, that the Premier immediately communicate to the Minister of Indian Affairs and Northern Development the GNWT's and this Legislative Assembly's objection to the appointment of a non-resident of the NWT, who is not nominated by the board members, as the chair of the Mackenzie Valley Land and Water Board.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Villeneuve. The motion is on the floor. The motion is in order. To the motion.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Question.

MR. SPEAKER: Question has been called. All those in favour? All those opposed? The motion is carried.

---Carried

---Applause

Item 15, motions. Item 16, first reading of bills. Item 17, second reading of bills. Item 18, consideration in Committee of the Whole of bills and other matters: Committee Report 12-15(3), Standing Committee on Rules and Procedures Report on the Review of the Report of the Chief Electoral Officer on the Administration of the 2003 General Election, with Mrs. Groenewegen in the chair.

ITEM 18: CONSIDERATION IN COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE OF BILLS AND OTHER MATTERS

CHAIRPERSON (Mrs. Groenewegen): I call Committee of the Whole to order. We don't have much, but we have some work on our agenda today. What is the wish of the committee? Mr. Menicoche.

MR. MENICOCHÉ: Thank you, Madam Chair. The committee wishes to consider Committee Report 12-15(3), Standing Committee on Rules and Procedures Report on the Review of the Report of the Chief Electoral Officer on the Administration of the 2003 General Election. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Mrs. Groenewegen): Thank you, Mr. Menicoche. Does the committee agree?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRPERSON (Mrs. Groenewegen): Agreed. Then, we will do that after a short break.

---SHORT RECESS

CHAIRPERSON (Mrs. Groenewegen): I call Committee of the Whole back to order. We have one item before us. General comments. Mr. Braden.

MR. BRADEN: Thank you, Madam Chair. I am going to briefly set the context of our committee, Madam Chair. Before I get into that, I would like to recognize in the gallery today our Chief Electoral Officer, Mr. Glen McLean.

---Applause

Madam Chair, the Rules and Procedures committee accepted on behalf of the Legislative Assembly, the report of the Chief Electoral Officer earlier last year. Accordingly, we took the report to the public for a response. Two public hearings were held and the views of Members were sought into four recommendations that were put forward. There were some very constructive ones on the overall impact and quality and calibre of elections and how we can better use our system to help with election events. One of those recommendations, Madam Chair, was to look at sharing our resources and the office of the Chief Electoral Officer with community governments to help them run their governments.

Madam Chair, we also have a recommendation before us to join up the CEO's office along with Education, Culture and Employment and develop a web-based educational site to promote the way elections work and how important they are, especially directed, Madam Chair, at young people.

The CEO brought forward the recommendation that the Elections Act itself should undergo a comprehensive review and consolidation. It is a piece of legislation, Madam Chair, that has been amended and tweaked several times over the course of the years. Some things are getting a little out of sync and a review is warranted.

But, Madam Chair, the most prominent recommendation is that the NWT should go to a fixed election date as something that would level the playing field among candidates. That would bring more stability and predictability and consistency to the way government runs and the way elections are going to be run. This is indeed the first of these four committee motions, Madam Chair, that have already been read into the record at a different point in our orders, Madam Chair. So I'm prepared to move these motions for committee's consideration and debate. So that will end my remarks, Madam Chair, and I

look forward to see if other Members have any general comments before proceeding with the motions. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Mrs. Groenewegen): Thank you, Mr. Braden. General comments. Mr. Villeneuve.

MR. VILLENEUVE: Thank you, Madam Chair. I just want to commend the CEO for coming out with a good comprehensive report and some good recommendations on the elections procedures and the option that the office of the CEO can assist municipalities and First Nations local governments in their elections procedures so that they are in accordance or in line with what the government practices.

I just wanted to mention something about the fixed election date. I know there was some discussion about whether a fixed election date should be established or whether it's an item that hasn't been really agreed to by the majority of the Members. I'm pretty open to establishing a fixed election date for every four years so that people will know when the elections are coming about. I think it just makes the process a little more fixed and people will know what to expect and when it's going to happen every four years. Just to the motion or whichever motion that the Member wishes to bring forward, I would support the motion which is titled the first Monday in November. Other than that, that's all I have to say. Thank you, Madam Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Mrs. Groenewegen): Thank you, Mr. Villeneuve. General comments. Mr. Ramsay.

MR. RAMSAY: Thank you, Madam Chair. I'll keep my comments brief.

---Applause

I'm in agreement with the Member for Tu Nedhe for the first Monday in November. That's my recommended choice. I think having a fixed election day will certainly be good not only for the Members that are here but for any potential candidates that are out there. If we have a date set, I mean, we all know, having run in campaigns before, it's a lot of work. The more lead time you can give somebody, the better off they'll be. So it's good. It's better for the process generally and I say the first Monday in November. The other reason I'm in support of that is in campaigning in October is a little bit difficult in some places, but I'd rather campaign in October than September. September in the far northern constituencies is a little bit more troublesome. So the first Monday in November, Madam Chair. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Mrs. Groenewegen): Thank you. General comments. Mr. Yakeleya.

MR. YAKELEYA: Short one, Madam Chair. The first Monday of October is the one I'll be supporting due to the weather situation up in the region. The first week in November is not good for campaigning and elections and the ice fog and all that. So the first Monday in October is something that I prefer to go with in our region. November is not something that I will be supporting. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Mrs. Groenewegen): Thank you, Mr. Yakeleya. General comments. Are there any further general comments? Mr. Villeneuve.

MR. VILLENEUVE: Thank you, Madam Chair. Just to reiterate my support for the first Monday in November, I guess just so that all Members are aware that I know September 1st hunting season opens and usually goes right to the middle or toward the middle of October. So

that's totally out of line with what NWT residents would expect. Everybody is out on the land, and unless we can get the polling stations out on the land then I would go for the first week in October, but I still stand by the first week of November. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Mrs. Groenewegen): Thank you, Mr. Villeneuve. General comments. Mr. Zoe.

MR. ZOE: Thank you, Madam Chair. Madam Chair, I'm sure reluctant to support anything at this point in time pertaining to the committee report discussing this particular issue. I understand that the committee has solicited in the papers, I believe, and I'm not sure if they did radio broadcasting and stuff like that to have public input, but at that time my understanding is that there was no public input except from the Chief Electoral Officer that made the report. The recommendation that he made was the first Monday in October to have a fixed date for election. I feel uncomfortable at this time to say I like the idea of having a fixed date, but the date itself is the problem I have right now. I would strongly suggest to Members if we could solicit or go back to our constituents and seek further consultation, because it hasn't been that long since this report has been dealt with and it could wait until our next sitting, which is in May.

During that session, we could deal with it and give us ample time to go back to our constituents and seek their advice or suggestions as to which way we should go. It is unfortunate, Madam Chair, that a lot of people are busy. For instance, my region has been busy with our land claims and self-government legislation in Ottawa. Although this is important, their priorities were someplace else. Since those items are sort of concluded with and we are working on something else, I am sure that they will take a look at this issue and make some sort of suggestion to me so that I can speak on their behalf. I hope that Members would reconsider dealing with this at this time and maybe deal with this whole issue at our next sitting in May. That is my comment on the issue at hand. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Mrs. Groenewegen): Thank you, Mr. Zoe. General comments. Next I have Ms. Lee.

MS. LEE: Thank you, Madam Chair. I just want to make a few comments to put on the record. I don't have a problem with a fixed date. I think that seems to be where the consensus is moving toward. I will work with whatever comes out of this House in that regard. The bigger question is when. It seems to be that there are 12 months and 19 Members and as many variations on different configurations. I know that, in leading up to this, we have had some other discussions and Members have different preferences for various reasons. For me, one of the things that I suggested was that I would like to see somehow having an election in the spring so that our budget cycle would be more conducive to making it possible for the Members coming in to have an impact and have an influence in their budget. The way it is now, if the Members get elected later in the fall, you are missing out on the regular business plan process. Usually, Christmas sneaks in and you have to rush to budget session without the Members really being able to incorporate many of the items in their platform and things that they fought for in their campaigns and things that they promised to the public for that year anyway. You have to wait for the second round or the next round of budget cycle to put those issues on. So my preference has been to put it some time in the spring. After the sitting Assembly passes a budget, I think the election should be

held shortly after that. The incumbents would have to run on the budget past and the new people would run on what they want to do differently. When they do get elected or whoever gets elected, the new Members can have an influence on the whole new budget.

Also, I appreciate that the consensus building now is somewhere in the fall. I understand the problems with the spring session. Mostly it is because of the fact that our cycle right now does not take us there unless we get an amendment to the NWT Act, which might take a long time. Though I do believe that, if the Legislature passes a formal motion and asked the federal government to do it, they might be more willing to do it than we are assuming currently.

This is not a big issue that I want to fight tooth and nail for. I am willing to consider three options that are here. It seems like the consensus is building toward October, November or June. Given those choices, I think I would rather choose October, to start as early in the fall as possible and go from there. I guess I will cast my vote in that way. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Mrs. Groenewegen): Thank you, Ms. Lee. For general comments, on the list, I still have Mr. Roland and Mr. Pokiak. Mr. Roland.

HON. FLOYD ROLAND: Thank you, Madam Chair. Madam Chair, I have been a part of three elections now. The first one was October. The second one, we went in December. The most recent one was late in November. Some of the things we need to consider when we do look at this -- and I heard a comment about the North -- is one of the things about a November election day is usually the ferries are pulled out and crossings start to freeze mid-October. So that would be difficult for some of those communities. As well, by the time you get into November, it is usually pretty cold. People that open their doors don't tend to open them very wide. Number three, it is getting quite dark, so people aren't sure when you are knocking on the door. They might mistake you for a Halloween, I guess.

---Laughter

For that, I look at it as going the first Monday in October. I would like to move a motion to that effect, and then Members may speak to the motion if they are feeling that way.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

Committee Motion 43-15(3): Recommendation To Establish The First Monday In October As The Fixed Date Of The General Election, Carried

HON. FLOYD ROLAND: I move that this committee recommends that the Legislative Assembly and Executive Council Act be amended to direct each Legislature to request that the Governor in Council dissolve the Legislative Assembly no later than the first Friday in September in an election year;

And further, that the Legislative and Executive Council Act and Elections Act be amended to allow the first Monday in October every four years to be the fixed date of the general election of Members to the Northwest Territories Legislative Assembly.

I was just trying to help things move along, Madam Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Mrs. Groenewegen): Well, thank you all. The motion is in order. To the motion.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Question.

CHAIRPERSON (Mrs. Groenewegen): Mr. Braden.

MR. BRADEN: Thank you, Madam Chair. The timing was indeed the topic that committee spent the most time exploring. In listening to Mr. Zoe's point about more public consultation, I think that, with the efforts that were made, I don't know that we would generate a lot more. I think there is a very broad acceptance of a fixed election date. Now, I think people are expecting us to work out the one that is the best for the most situations. Madam Chair, I would speak in favour of the motion, personally.

As Mr. Roland and I have had two elections now in the front end of winter, I don't relish the thought of doing it any more or of asking any other candidates to do it. A campaign in September, I think, is a really good fit or the best fit we are going to get across the length and breadth of the North. Our business planning process, at least as we know it now, would be interrupted. But business planning processes are not locked in stone either. I would like to think that we can amend the way we go about our business planning process that would give the new Assembly some tools to better work that way. It should also be pointed out, Madam Chair, that this is going to shorten our term I think by three or four months. That is one thing to keep in mind for our own legislative program here. This is not the last piece of electoral kind of business that we or the public are going to deal with, because our laws, as they were set a couple of years ago, will compel us to have an electoral boundaries review. That has to begin within the next term of the next year, so there's more of the same to come.

CHAIRPERSON (Mrs. Groenewegen): Thank you, Mr. Braden. We have a motion on the floor. The motion is for the first Monday in October. To the motion. I still have two more speakers at least recorded so far: Mr. Pokiak, Mr. Ramsay and then Mr. Menicoche.

MR. POKIAK: Thank you, Madam Chair. I, like my colleague, agree that September is the time when people are out doing their subsistence hunt for geese. The third option, May/June, is the time again when people are out on the land.

I listened here today to people talking about the weather, but up north when you have to campaign, you go campaigning. It doesn't matter what kind of weather it is. If you want to start campaigning, the option is the first Monday in November. Thank you, Madam Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Mrs. Groenewegen): Okay. Then you aren't speaking in favour of the motion. Mr. Ramsay.

MR. RAMSAY: Thank you, Madam Chair. I just want to state that, of course, I am in favour of a fixed election date. When it is, is debatable. I can buy the argument that Mr. Roland makes, but I also listened to my colleagues here who have concerns about it being hunting season. Personally, I could campaign in cold weather, warm weather, it doesn't matter. At this stage of the game, Madam Chair, I would agree to an election next week, it's been that long of a haul here. So I will vote in favour of the motion. Let's get it done.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Yeah!

CHAIRPERSON (Mrs. Groenewegen): Thank you, Mr. Ramsay. To the motion for the first Monday in October, Mr. Menicoche.

MR. MENICOCHÉ: Thank you, Madam Chair. I am certainly in favour of not campaigning in the snow.

---Laughter

But I am not really in favour of a fixed election date. I won't be voting for this motion.

CHAIRPERSON (Mrs. Groenewegen): Thank you, Mr. Menicoche. Next on the list is Mr. Zoe. To the motion.

MR. ZOE: Thank you, Madam Chair. Although my previous comments said maybe we should wait until the next sitting in May to discuss this, I just was thinking about the process. This gives the government direction. If we give them direction, then hopefully they will start working on developing the required legislation or make amendments to the various legislation. That's just a first step. Then once the bill is developed, it will go through the process, go back to committee and they will have public hearings. At that time, if they want the date to be changed, we will have a good, healthy debate and maybe we will have more public input at this time. Therefore, I will be supporting Mr. Roland's motion.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Yeah!

---Applause

CHAIRPERSON (Mrs. Groenewegen): Okay. Thank you, Mr. Zoe. To the motion. Mr. Hawkins.

MR. HAWKINS: Thank you, Madam Chair. I will be voting in favour of the motion. Although I personally prefer winter elections to show how hardy we are as northerners. I want to emphasize that I think Mr. Zoe is right; we will see this a few times, so it can be further debated later. Thank you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Question.

CHAIRPERSON (Mrs. Groenewegen): Thank you. You raise a good point. This is good drafting instruction, so that the legislation can be drafted up. This will not be your last opportunity to speak to it. There is always the prerogative to change your mind. To the motion.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Question.

CHAIRPERSON (Mrs. Groenewegen): Question is being called. All those in favour? All those opposed? The motion is carried.

---Carried

---Applause

Mr. Zoe.

MR. ZOE: Madam Chair, the report also discussed that a review be undertaken to consider the efficiencies and sharing of resources that could occur with the office of the Chief Electoral Officer, assuming the administration responsibilities for election of community governments under the Local Authorities Election Act. I think this review should happen. Let them take a look at it and see if we can incorporate to see if it can be done.

Committee Motion 44-15(3) Recommendation To Review The Sharing Of Resources Possible For The CEO To Assume Administrative Responsibility for Municipal Elections, Carried

To that effect, Madam Chair, I would like to move that the committee recommends that a review be undertaken to consider the efficiencies and sharing of resources that could occur with the office of the Chief Electoral Officer assuming the administrative responsibility for elections of community governments under the Local Authorities Election Act.

CHAIRPERSON (Mrs. Groenewegen): Thank you, Mr. Zoe. The motion is in order. To the motion.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Question.

CHAIRPERSON (Mrs. Groenewegen): Question is being called. All those in favour of the motion? All those opposed? The motion is carried.

---Carried

---Applause

CHAIRPERSON (Mrs. Groenewegen): Mr. Villeneuve.

MR. VILLENEUVE: Thank you, Madam Chair. There is also another recommendation and another motion to support the recommendations by the CEO. This motion is with regard to a partnership development with some government departments for a web-based interactive educational site.

Committee Motion 45-15(3) Recommendation To Develop A Web-Based Interactive Educational Site And Curriculum For Schools, Carried

Madam Chair, I move that this committee recommends that the Chief Electoral Officer, in partnership with the Legislative Assembly and the Department of Education, Culture and Employment, develop a web-based educational site and curriculum on election participation for use in the schools. Thank you, Madam Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Mrs. Groenewegen): Thank you, Mr. Villeneuve. The motion is in order. To the motion. Mr. Yakeleya.

MR. YAKELEYA: Just for clarification, when you say for participation for youths in schools, is this also for Aurora College and other institutions or just specifically for schools?

CHAIRPERSON (Mrs. Groenewegen): Thank you, Mr. Yakeleya. Mr. Braden.

MR. BRADEN: Thank you, Madam Chair. That's a good question. As recommended to us in the report of the CEO, the problem is that young people are participating in elections in increasingly shrinking numbers. Like Canada's federal Chief Electoral Officer, Mr. Kingsley, in the last federal election quite an extensive nation-wide program was launched aimed at the young people. So while the program here is suggesting web-based for schools, educational institutions, it would have a big platform to jump elsewhere. So that was the focus, Madam Chair. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Mrs. Groenewegen): Thank you. Mr. Yakeleya spoke to the motion. Mr. Braden spoken to the motion. To the motion.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Question.

CHAIRPERSON (Mrs. Groenewegen): Question is being called. All those in favour of the motion? All those opposed? The motion is carried.

---Carried

---Applause

Mr. Hawkins.

Committee Motion 46-15(3) Recommendation To Conduct A Comprehensive Review Of The Elections Act, Carried

MR. HAWKINS: Thank you, Madam Chair. At this time, I believe I am moving the last motion. I move that this committee recommends that a comprehensive review of the Elections Act be undertaken by the Chief Electoral Officer and a revised act be presented to the Legislative Assembly for consideration;

And further, that the Plebiscite Act be repealed and that the provisions for the administration for plebiscite and referendum be integrated into the revised Election Act. Thank you, Madam Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Mrs. Groenewegen): Thank you, Mr. Hawkins. The motion is in order. To the motion.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Question.

CHAIRPERSON (Mrs. Groenewegen): Question is being called. All those in favour of the motion? All those opposed? The motion is carried.

---Carried

---Applause

Does the committee agree that this concludes the consideration of Committee Report 12-15(3)?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRPERSON (Mrs. Groenewegen): Thank you. There is no further business before the committee, so I will now rise and report progress.

MR. SPEAKER: Can I have the report of Committee of the Whole, please. Mrs. Groenewegen.

ITEM 19: REPORT OF COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE

MRS. GROENEWEGEN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, your committee has been considering Committee Report 12-15(3) and would like to report progress with four motions being adopted, and that Committee Report 12-15(3) is concluded. Mr. Speaker, I move that the report of Committee of the Whole be concurred with. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mrs. Groenewegen. Do we have a seconder for the motion? The honourable Member for Weledeh, Mr. Handley.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Ohhh.

---Applause

MR. SPEAKER: The motion is in order. All those in favour? All those opposed? The motion is carried.

---Carried

Item 20, third reading of bills. The honourable Minister of Justice, Mr. Dent.

ITEM 20: THIRD READING OF BILLS

Bill 17: Modernization Of Benefits And Obligations Act

HON. CHARLES DENT: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I move, seconded by the honourable Member for Weledeh, that Bill 17, Modernization of Benefits and Obligations Act, be read for the third time. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Dent. The motion is in order. Mr. Menicoche.

Point Of Privilege

MR. MENICOCHÉ: Mr. Speaker, I would like to point out a point of privilege. Yesterday, on March 9, 2005, in this Legislature during Committee of the Whole debate, I believe that inappropriate amendments were made to a bill that affects my ability to do my job to represent my constituents. I was unable to send this bill back to the responsible standing committee for proper public debate to engage our institution of participatory consensus government. This bill has changed significantly. The Minister added five amendments to a bill of 10; very irregular, and made a new reference to the Wildlife Act

which is not an amendment but is an addition. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Menicoche. Before I rule on the point of privilege, I will allow Members to speak to the point of privilege. Ms. Lee.

MS. LEE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I believe that I have shown in the past to take very seriously any points of privilege that are raised. I do believe that they are very important and it is one of the privileges of being here, to raise those points, and I respect that very much.

I do want to respond for the sake of the debate here, just to respond to the point being raised. Mr. Speaker, I think it is very serious when anyone raises questions about whether we are giving the public the proper input into our legislative process, and those should be raised whenever there are questions asked and they should be properly answered to. I just want to say that in this case I don't think that it's true that the public have not had a chance to look at this bill or the intent of this bill, Mr. Speaker.

This bill was introduced in the House last October. The public hearing process of this was advertised in mass media throughout November. I know that the Social Programs committee held at least three public hearings on it, and the amendments, I know are troublesome for some and I appreciate that there are some points that are changing the nature and the substantive scope of the bill but, in my view, I believe those changes that were made are very much in line with the preamble of the bill which was introduced and read and accepted by the House, and I don't believe those amendments made in Committee of the Whole yesterday changes that.

So I do respect the right of Members to raise a point of privilege. I do want to add my point to this debate, and that is that I don't believe in this case that the assertions being made are true. Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and I await your decision.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Ms. Lee. Do any other Members want to speak to the point of privilege? Mr. Braden.

MR. BRADEN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I, too, appreciate any Member's contention that there may be a point of process and an interference with the public's access to what we are doing here. In this case, I do not feel that we have breached that trust.

The purpose of the bill, when it was introduced last fall, was quite clear to me, Mr. Speaker, that it was designed to be a survey, if you will, or an inventory of all of our legislation to catch the areas and definitions regarding spouses or references to particular genders that would not be consistent with Canadian law, and we are compelled to follow that. So even though, as the Member quite correctly pointed out, there were some new provisions brought in in a couple of acts, it was very consistent with the spirit and intent, and I think the impact of the bill will, in fact, result in more people having obligations and benefits returned or restored to them no matter what their gender.

So I think the amendments that were brought forward by the Minister were positive and certainly in the spirit of the bill. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Braden. To the point of privilege. The honourable Member for Hay River South, Mrs. Groenewegen.

MRS. GROENEWEGEN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, for the record, I do believe that Mr. Menicoche

does have a point of privilege. If he feels that his ability to represent the interests of his constituents has been curtailed or infringed on in any way, and I think that time is not of the essence with respect to these changes. I think there is substantive time. I would also like to suggest that in fact the reason why these amendments were not made at the committee level was because they couldn't make it out of committee on a vote. Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mrs. Groenewegen. To the point of privilege. The honourable Member for Sahtu, Mr. Yakeleya.

MR. YAKELEYA: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I am going to support the honourable Mr. Menicoche, Member for Nahendeh, in terms of his point of privilege. Mr. Speaker, when we come into the House, the integrity of this institution is at stake in terms of the process and the respect that we give each other and the jobs that we do. If there are changes made to a bill, we need to be aware of them, as committee members. If there are some changes to a bill without us as committee members not knowing or the House not going through the process, even though it may be consistent with supporting the bill, if there are some new provisions that are brought in at the last minute, then I really question the integrity of the process that we have been engaged in in the last couple of weeks here. So I also await the ruling of your decision, Mr. Speaker, in terms of the point of privilege. Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Yakeleya. The honourable Member for North Slave, Mr. Zoe.

MR. ZOE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I concur with my colleague from Nahendeh and the comments that Mrs. Groenewegen has made also. I believe that the process that's been outlined by Mr. Yakeleya. I just want to make a couple other points. Although Ms. Lee has indicated that they follow the normal routine and follow a process of putting advertisements out so they can have general public input, I don't think they've gone far enough, particularly on such a sensitive issue as this particular bill is. I think they should have gone a little bit more in consultation with aboriginal and municipal governments. Then that way we could have had more serious input into this particular bill. I think my colleague here has a point of privilege.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Zoe. To the point of privilege. The honourable Minister of Justice, Mr. Dent.

HON. CHARLES DENT: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. To the point of privilege, committee advertised this bill and held public hearings and I would have to agree with the committee chair that the process was as is normal with our bills. The committee directed us after the first hearing with me to consider bringing forward some amendments and we did that. Then we were asked to bring them to the floor so that everybody could debate them. Again, that's entirely within the standard process for committees. The amendments, Mr. Speaker, quite clearly are within the scope and principle of the bill, they are not substantive. The purpose of this bill is to amend several acts to ensure that references to spouse appropriately capture persons who live in spousal relationships outside marriage. That is the purpose of this bill and that is what has been accommodated through not only the bill, but the amendments. So I would say that there has been no breach of privilege in this instance. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker's Ruling

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Dent. To the point of privilege. No further comments. Thank you, Members. When a point of privilege is raised, the duty of the Speaker is to determine whether a prima facie breach of privilege has occurred and whether the matter has been raised at its earliest opportunity. Having heard the arguments of the Members on this point of privilege, it is my ruling that a prima facie breach of privilege has not occurred in this instance.

I will remind Members that a breach of privilege occurs when the ability of the House to execute its functions has been obstructed or where individual Members have been obstructed in the performance of their individual duties. It is my ruling that neither of these conditions have been met. Many of the Members' arguments relate to the matter of procedure and the rules of this House. While these matters may have been relevant on a point of order raised at the appropriate time, they are not necessarily relevant to a question of privilege.

To the motion. Mrs. Groenewegen.

MRS. GROENEWEGEN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I request a recorded vote.

MR. SPEAKER: The Member is seeking a recorded vote. To the motion. The honourable Member for Nahendeh, Mr. Menicoche.

Motion To Amend Bill 17, Defeated

MR. MENICOCHÉ: Mr. Speaker, I move, seconded by the Member for North Slave, that the motion be amended by striking out "that Bill 17 be read for the third time" and substituting "that Bill 17 be not now read a third time, but that it be read a third time this day three months hence."

---Applause

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Menicoche. The motion is in order. To the motion. Mr. Menicoche.

MR. MENICOCHÉ: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I make this motion today because I do not agree that we are ready to give Bill 17 third reading. This bill has not been through an appropriate public review process. I find it very disturbing that five amendments were made to Bill 17 yesterday during Committee of the Whole debate. To me it is totally inappropriate that these amendments, which change the context of the bill, were made without an opportunity for public input. When do our constituents get to have a say? For example, an amendment was made to the Wildlife Act, Mr. Speaker. That's a very key act for a lot of people and it's unbelievable that we short circuited the democratic process by not having a public hearing on something that important. There is a dangerous precedence that is being set by not even allowing the public an opportunity to be informed about a major change to legislation, let alone the opportunity to speak to it. How can we justify this? If we're going to evade the democratic process this time, what's next, Mr. Speaker? In my opinion, this bill should be reintroduced in the next session so that people can be given an opportunity to appear before the standing committee and speak to it in its final form, including the amendments that were made yesterday. It's the right thing to do, Mr. Speaker. Reintroduce the bill so our constituents can have a say in the legislation that's being made here. Mahsi cho.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Menicoche. To the amendment. The honourable Member for Hay River South, Mrs. Groenewegen.

MRS. GROENEWEGEN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'll be voting in favour of the amendment. I do think that the way these amendments came forward on the floor of the House in Committee of the Whole is an aberration to how we normally deal with amendments to legislation in our committees. It may only be a convention, it may only be a tradition that we don't make those kind of significant amendments in Committee of the Whole, but the fact is normally those are carried out in committee and we have diverged from normal process here. For that reason I do agree with the Member that we do need to give constituents a chance for input and further public consultation. I will support the motion. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mrs. Groenewegen. To the amendment. The honourable Member for North Slave, Mr. Zoe.

MR. ZOE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I will be supporting the motion brought forward. This bill is a very sensitive issue and, as my colleague has indicated, I think we should go back to our aboriginal and municipal governments, get their input, and from the general public again. It doesn't hurt to wait three months and get reintroduced...

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear! Hear!

MR. ZOE: ...in our May sitting. On that same issue, I wonder if the government also would consider having their Members having a free vote on this. Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Zoe. To the amendment. The honourable Member for Range Lake, Ms. Lee.

MS. LEE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I will not be supporting this motion, Mr. Speaker, because as I stated earlier I do not believe the amendments yesterday did change the bill substantially. But more importantly, Mr. Speaker, I just need to make it very clear because the suggestions and assertions being made here are very serious and I think they should be answered to. Mr. Speaker, I find it interesting that even the committee, I have to tell you for the House that the committee agreed that the bill was ready for Committee of the Whole. That's how it ended up in this committee. It was moved to the committee by the committee. There were no indications there that would suggest anything other than normal democratic process. I should also point out that it's a very routine procedure that bills are amended in Committee of the Whole all the time. We just did that in supplementary appropriation yesterday. That is what we're supposed to do. We make amendments to bills all the time as long as it does not change the nature and substance of the bill. I don't believe the amendments that were made yesterday do that.

Mr. Speaker, I'd like reiterate once again because I think it's really important that there be no impression put out there that the public did not have a chance to respond to this. Mr. Speaker, this was introduced last October. That was six months ago. It's not like this bill was introduced two weeks ago and it's being rammed through the House. It was introduced in October. It was advertised all through November. There were public announcements on the radio in February for all the public hearings we had. I'm compelled to say, as the chair of the committee, that I could appreciate everybody not agreeing on this bill, but I think the objections to the process are verging on something more serious. It really seems to be questioning the conduct of the committee. Mr. Speaker, I would urge

the Members to be more generous about how they regard the work of a committee. Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Ms. Lee. To the amendment. The honourable Member for Yellowknife Centre, Mr. Hawkins.

MR. HAWKINS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm going to say two things. The first thing is I'm very supportive of Bill 17...and I stress, wait for the second. I can't see why we would stop or stall, because I really believe in rights and the acceptance of rights. But I can't say that on one hand, without giving my colleagues the extra couple of months that they have asked for. That's all that they have asked for. The problem is what do we do if it prorogues, and that's exactly it. I need to hear how it's brought back on the paper by someone who is speaking in favour of the delay, how we assure that that can be brought back in May. If I can be assured of that, I can wait until May. But I can't go strictly on a leap of faith that it will return in May. So unless I hear that today, I'll be voting against it. So somebody needs to speak to how it will be back on the paper, and I will vote in favour of the amendment.

---Applause

MR. SPEAKER: To the amendment. The honourable Member for Great Slave, Mr. Braden.

MR. BRADEN: Mr. Speaker, it should be very clear that we are about to prorogue, and approval of this motion would take it off the order paper. It would die, we would have to begin the process all over again, and I do not see at all the benefit of that. So I will be voting against this motion.

I think Ms. Lee captured what we should be looking at here, and the objections are to process, and not in this venue, Mr. Speaker, to the substance of it.

Standing committee chose to allow all of those amendments, those five amendments that the Member for Nahendeh talked about. By the way, I think three of them were essentially typographical errors; they are of little substance. The Standing Committee on Social Programs said there are aspects of this that a broader membership of the Legislative Assembly should be allowed to speak to. We are not going to pre-empt or presume anything on their behalf; we're going to bring that debate into Committee of the Whole which, in effect, made it much more public and much more accessible for all Members and for the public to hear and see. So I think the procedural point that Social Programs committee sort of missed the boat by not adopting these amendments in committee was, in fact, a very positive and accommodating step and we have all benefited by that.

So I really urge Members to consider what value this will bring to this bill. It was made amply clear, in my listening to what was going on, that we can take this proactive step as a Legislative Assembly and change these laws now, or sit back and wait for a court or other jurisdictions to make those changes for us.

Three months...I'm sorry; if we follow this, the bill will have to start all over again. It could be at least another six months, maybe another year before we could see this back on the order paper to allow the kind of full public debate that is being advocated here. I do not see the benefit of it. This is a great exchange, Mr. Speaker, but I can't vote in support of this amendment.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Braden. To the amendment.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Question.

MR. SPEAKER: Question is being called. All those in favour of the amendment? All those opposed to the amendment? The amendment is defeated.

---Defeated

To the motion.

AN HON. MEMBER: Recorded vote.

MR. SPEAKER: A recorded vote is being requested. Mr. Clerk. All those in favour, please rise.

Recorded Vote

CLERK OF THE HOUSE (Mr. Mercer): Mr. Dent; Mr. McLeod, Deh Cho; Mr. Bell; Mr. Ramsay; Mr. Villeneuve; Ms. Lee; Mr. Braden; Mr. Hawkins; Mr. Miltenberger; Mr. Krutko; Mr. Roland; Mr. Handley.

MR. SPEAKER: All those opposed, please rise.

CLERK OF THE HOUSE (Mr. Mercer): Mrs. Groenewegen; Mr. Pokiak; Mr. Zoe; Mr. Menicoche; Mr. Yakeleya; Mr. McLeod, Inuvik Twin Lakes.

MR. SPEAKER: All those abstaining, please rise. To the motion: all those in favour, 12; all those opposed, six; abstaining, zero. The motion is carried.

---Carried

Bill 17 has had third reading. Item 20, third reading of bills. The honourable Minister of Finance, Mr. Roland.

Bill 20: Supplementary Appropriation Act, No. 3, 2004-2005

HON. JOE HANDLEY: Mr. Speaker, I move, seconded by the honourable Member for Thebacha, that Bill 20, Supplementary Appropriation Act, No. 3, 2004-2005, be read for the third time. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Handley. The motion is on the floor. The motion is in order. To the motion.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Question.

MR. SPEAKER: Question is being called. All those in favour? All those opposed? The motion is carried.

---Carried

Bill 20 has had third reading. Item 20, third reading of bills.

Speaker's Closing Remarks

Colleagues, before we go on, I would like to take this opportunity to let you all know what an honour and a pleasure it has been serving this House as your Speaker during this past session. I have learned a lot and will endeavour to put what I have learned as your presiding officer to good use in our next session.

This budget session has been long, but it has been constructive and beneficial to the people we all serve. The debates have been heated at times, but respectful, and for that I thank all of you. It has certainly made my job easier.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank all those whose jobs are never easy, beginning with the Sergeant-at-Arms and the Pages who have attended to our needs over the past five weeks...

---Applause

...including the many late nights. Thank you for your tireless efforts, and good luck in all of your work and studies.

Thank you also to the Clerk and his staff who have been of faithful assistance to me and all Members during the last five weeks.

---Applause

Thank you, as well, to all the government officials and the employees whose daily labours and commitment contribute so much to the people of the Territories and to the work done in this House.

As we near the end of a seemingly never-ending Third Session of the 15th Assembly, I want to remind Members that in every ending there is a beginning. As we leave this Chamber for the next few weeks, we must be mindful that our work continues and there is much yet to be done. I am sure all Members are looking forward to the second Circle of Northern Leaders meeting to be held next month in Inuvik, as an opportunity to build northern partnerships and shared concerns.

On behalf of the youth of our territory, I would also like to note that the sixth annual Youth Parliament will be held here in this Chamber during the week of May 2nd to the 6th. The participation of all Members is encouraged to assist our young parliamentarians with their duties and their quest for knowledge.

To you all I say best wishes, travel safely, keep to the high road and, until we meet again, may the Creator's blessings be upon you and yours.

Mr. Clerk, would you ascertain whether his Honour, the Deputy Commissioner, is prepared to enter this Chamber to assent to bills and prorogue the Third Session of the 15th Legislative Assembly?

ITEM 21: PROROGATION

DEPUTY COMMISSIONER WHITFORD: Please be seated. Mr. Speaker, Members of the 15th Legislative Assembly, it is both an honour and a privilege to be in your service once again.

I would like to begin by extending my sincere and heartfelt sympathies to the families, loved ones and colleagues of the four young RCMP officers killed in the line of duty in northern Alberta last week. Constable Anthony Gordon, a northerner, originally from Fort Smith; Constable Peter Sheimann; Constable Leo Johnston; Constable Brock Myrol, were more than just courageous and dedicated officers. They were sons, husbands, fathers, friends and respected colleagues.

On behalf of all northerners, I share the grief and the shock of my fellow Canadians and offer my sincere condolences, not only to those close to them, but to all members of the RCMP touched by this tragedy. Today, a national memorial service was held in Edmonton, Alberta, for the fallen officers where the Northwest Territories was represented by Her Honour Commissioner Glenna Hansen. Our thoughts and our prayers are with everyone at this time.

I would also like to take this opportunity to thank members of the RCMP for the selfless and dependable work they do on our behalf. I understand the community of Rae-Edzo recently held an event thanking the RCMP for their contribution to the community. I hope more communities will reflect on the valuable work of their local RCMP and take the opportunity to thank them as well.

A group of individuals who promote learning and discipline to our youth are the Canadian Rangers. Commissioner Hansen recently opened the Junior Rangers Air Rifle Competitions here in Yellowknife and has asked me to

thank the junior rangers from all territories for a most exciting competition.

The Canadian Rangers provide a structured and supervised program for young people from the ages of 12 to 18, promoting traditional lifestyles and cultures. The Junior Canadian Rangers Program is the largest youth program in the North with over 1,000 members. On behalf of Commissioner Hansen, I would like to thank them for the excellent work they do across our territory.

Our northern communities are full of many talented and committed residents. Today I would like to recognize some wonderful people who have recently been the recipients of a number of different awards. First the Wise Women Awards. These awards are bestowed upon women who have been nominated by their peers as examples of intelligent and respected contributors to furthering the role of women in northern society. This year's recipients are Ruth Wright from the Beaufort-Delta; Tanya Cazon from the Deh Cho; Helen Tobie from the North Slave; Alphonsine McNeely from the Sahtu; and Sister Agnes Sutherland, South Slave. All these ladies are strong, positive role models in their communities and throughout the North. I congratulate them for being honoured as this year's wise women.

Recently some brave and selfless people were recognized with Rescue Commendation Awards from the Life Saving Society. The recipients of these awards put aside their personal safety and go to the rescue and assistance of those in peril. I would like to congratulate the recipients of the Rescue Commendation Awards. They are, in the youth category, Nicole Henkel; Angus Willson; Hanna Willson; Ishai Forget-Manson; and, Devon Allooloo. In the adult category, we have Edward Jumbo; Paul Falvo; Todd Burlingame; and, Christa Domchek. As well, I am very pleased to announce that three northerners have been honoured with Aboriginal Achievement Awards to be presented to them in a televised ceremony in Saskatoon at the end of this month. I am delighted that Andy Carpenter, Sr.; Bertha Allen; and, Sharon Firth have been selected by the Aboriginal Achievement Foundation to receive these prestigious awards.

Andy Carpenter, Sr. has devoted his life to conservation and sustainable use of wildlife and he has held many other positions of leadership. He was involved in the Inuvialuit Final Agreement and is the founding chair of the Inuvialuit Game Council, a position he held for 10 years. Among many other achievements, Mr. Carpenter initiated the International Polar Bear Management Agreement between the Inuvialuit and the Alaskan Inupiat and helped establish the Ivvavik National Park, the first Canadian national park legislated by a land claims settlement. Andy Carpenter, Sr. lives in Sachs Harbour.

Bertha Allen is a life-long activist for social change and the advancement of aboriginal and northern women. A strong advocate for education and training, Mrs. Allen helped found the NWT Training Centre in Yellowknife and Inuvik and worked as a life skill facilitator at those centres. Through her leadership as a former president of the Advisory Council on the Status of Women, founding president of the Native Women's Association of the NWT and former president of the Native Women's Association of Canada, Mrs. Allen has been a tireless promoter for women. In addition, Mrs. Allen has served on the NWT Constitutional Committee, the NWT Judicial Appointments Committee, the Multicultural Advisory Committee to the RCMP, and was the only woman to sit on the Bourque Commission. Mrs. Allen lives in Inuvik.

The third northern recipient is Sharon Firth. Sharon was born in Aklavik and, along with her twin sister, Shirley, has competed in cross-country skiing in four winter Olympics, three world championships and countless other national skiing competitions. In 1985, she took part in the Great American Ski Chase and took the overall title. A highly regarded role model, Ms. Firth delivers motivational speeches in schools throughout the Northwest Territories. As well, she has been the subject of many documentaries, including CBC's *The Olympians*, *the Firth Sisters* and *Northern Gold*. Ms. Firth was inducted into the Canadian Ski Museum and Skiing Hall of Fame in 1990. In 2002, she received the Queen's Golden Jubilee Medal. Sharon Firth lives in Yellowknife.

On behalf of northerners, I offer warm congratulations to Andy Carpenter, Sr., Bertha Allen and Sharon Firth for their aboriginal achievement awards and hope that they have a very enjoyable evening at the awards ceremony later this month. I am sure there will be many supporters in the audience cheering them on.

Assent To Bills

Now as Deputy Commissioner of the Northwest Territories, I am pleased to assent to the following bills: Bill 15, Tlicho Community Service Agency Act; Bill 16, Northwest Territories Business Development and Investment Corporation Act; Bill 17, Modernization of Benefits and Obligations Act; Bill 18, An Act to Amend the Territorial Court Act; Bill 19, Appropriation Act, 2005-2006; Bill 20, Supplementary Appropriation Act, No. 3, 2004-2005; Bill 21, An Act to Amend the Public Service Act.

Prior to proroguing this Third Session of the 15th Legislative Assembly, I would like to advise you that the Fourth Session of the 15th Legislative Assembly will convene on Wednesday, May 25, 2005, at 1:30 p.m.

As Deputy Commissioner of the Northwest Territories, I hereby prorogue the Third Session of the 15th Legislative Assembly of the Northwest Territories. I wish you all a very happy Easter and a safe journey home. Thank you, mahsi, merci beaucoup.

---Applause

---PROROGATION

The House prorogued at 6:12 p.m.

